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E G O

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF  
JAMES AGATE

## MY BOOKS

### *Novels*

RESPONSIBILITY  
BLESSED ARE THE RICH  
GEMEL IN LONDON

### *Belles-Lettres*

L. OF C. (LINES OF COMMUNICATION)  
FANTASIES AND IMPROMPTUS  
WHITE HORSE AND RED LION  
ON AN ENGLISH SCREEN  
AGATE'S FOLLY  
THE COMMON TOUCH  
A SHORT VIEW OF THE ENGLISH STAGE  
PLAYGOING

### *Essays of the Theatre*

BUZZ, BUZZ !  
ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS  
AT HALF-PAST EIGHT  
THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE, 1923  
THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE, 1924  
THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE, 1925  
THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE, 1926  
THEIR HOUR UPON THE STAGE  
MY THEATRE TALKS  
FIRST NIGHTS

### *Biography*

RACHEL

### *Anthology*

THE ENGLISH DRAMATIC CRITICS, 1660-1932





# E G O

*THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY*  
*OF*  
JAMES AGATE

*If you do not want to explore an egoism  
you should not read autobiography.*

H. G. WELLS.



HAMISH HAMILTON  
90 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON

*First Published 1935*

To  
MY BROTHER  
CHARLES GUSTAVE AGATE





## NOTE

NONE of the characters in this book is imaginary, and whether any of them is real metaphysics has not yet determined.



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*My thanks are due to Mr. James Gunn for the generous gift of his drawing.*



## NOTE

IT was Arnold Bennett's *Journals* which gave me the idea of keeping a Diary of my own. Two years of this form the second part of this volume. The first part is an account of my life up to the point where the Diary begins.





BOOK I

I MAKE MY BED



## CHAPTER I

### RAISING THE BLIND

**H**OLA!" shouted my good doctor and better friend, emerging from the railway station at Leicester on a beautiful June morning in the present year of grace, 1934. "I wasn't sure whether to come to-day or not," he went on; "I thought you might be in jail." Here the good fellow pulled out of his pocket a cutting from the previous day's evening paper which, first with the news, was overjoyed to tell its readers how James Agate, "described as a dramatic critic", at some police court in Essex had been committed to prison for a debt of twenty pounds. Jumping into the Bentley (6½-litre open tourer, 1927 model, small mileage, perfect condition, original cost £2,800, dealer's price including four new tyres £275 under usual H.P. conditions) we drove to the show ground, where my little mare, Black Tulip, and the pony, Smokeless Diamond, between them won eighteen pounds, or nine-tenths of that unhappy writ. In the car I told how I had some vague recollection of a thick-booted person interviewing me in bed—where I was simultaneously breakfasting, answering the telephone, correcting proofs and dictating an article—and presenting me with something he called "conduct money". Having put this into the Post Office Savings Bank, together with what was left in my pockets from the day before—an admirable method of saving started some months previously whereby a giddy sum (meaning an amount in excess of twenty pounds) had accrued in addition to a balance in the bank proper—I promptly forgot all about the matter. Alas that silly scrap of paper turned out to be the cloud no bigger than a man's hand! On the strength of that paragraph my tailors, breeches-makers and what-not, scenting the way the East wind was blowing, so far forgot their West End manners as to get behind the wind and make it blow still

harder ; in plain English, hatters and hosiers normally aspiring to a trifle on account every six months all demanded, all wanted to be paid immediately, out of hand, not note of hand. *C'était gigantesque !* as Flaubert used to say of bourgeois enormity.

I can never forget the shock of delight with which, when still in my teens, I came across another Frenchman's "A debt is a work of imagination no creditor can understand". The contrary maxim—"My riches consist not in the multitude of my possessions but in the fewness of my wants"—struck me as a mean and pettifogging philosophy the moment I stood on tiptoe to scan the pedestal of the old bore preaching it in Peel Park, Salford. Whereas "Debt is a martyrdom without a heaven" struck me as a sublime utterance. My favourite character in *The Human Comedy* was Maxime de Trailles. This superb cad and fine flower of the *condottierisme parisien* inflamed my young imagination out of all reason. At that time I thought the grandest sentence in all literature was that which described how, when the arch-roué married a young girl with a dowry of a million francs—"his coach-builder, his tailor, and indeed all his creditors let off fireworks". A year or two later I came across Charles de Lovenjoul's monograph, which contains an amusing sketch carrying on the lives of some of the Comedy's characters. Maxime had ended by burying himself in the country and speechifying at cattle shows. "Late Maxime de Trailles" he signed himself. For some years I went about writing imaginary letters signed "Late James Agate".

It was at seventeen, then, that I first got into that state of indebtedness in which it has pleased me to remain, though always with a strict knowledge of the amount involved. There has never been a time when I have not proposed to myself to get square "by" midsummer or Christmas. I have paid in the long run. But the run has had to be long, and the trouble has arisen through my contemplating mile races while shorter-sighted tradesfolk have had their eyes on sprints of a hundred yards. My desk is full of discarded "Statements of J. A.'s Affairs" and the current one has always stood on my desk like a death sentence on the Home Secretary's. Up till now, however, I have avoided execution.

## RAISING THE BLIND

But there is another side to this picture. If I had ever let the question of affording stand in the way of doing I should never have come to London and never have written a word of dramatic criticism. And there have been compensations. Consider this charming letter from one whose bicycle I refused, forty years ago, to wheel up hills on the plea that if girls indulge in boyish sports they must be as self-reliant as boys.

June 24th, 1934.

DEAR JIMMIE,

I have watched you with awe and admiration mount higher and higher in the fickle world of fame, and I have kept silent—being content to gaze at your brilliance as one looks to the stars. I have heard you spoken of as the leading critic of the day—and seen your name in print in papers of repute and otherwise—and I have kept silent. But now that you are threatened with a debtor's prison—and I can almost hear the rattling of the chains and see the rats gnawing at your toes—the sympathy of an old, old friend goes out to you—and like a soft grey dove I come hovering at your prison bars with cooings of comfort and beaksful of crumbs.

How ever have you got into this unseemly mess—and what is the mint for if it doesn't turn out enough money?

Well, apart from lending you the needful you have my sincerest sympathy and I shall still continue to gaze upwards at you. It is only in adversity that one gets back to primitive things and the privileges of old friendships.

I remain,

Your old friend,

ETHEL.

P.S. I am at a loss to know which prison to send this to.

I cannot, like most compilers of autobiographies, plead lack of practice, for I have never written anything else. I am the principal character in two of my novels, and claim a good half of the attention in the third. The hero of *Responsibility*, whose name I forget, is me. Oliver Sheldon, who, in *Blessed are the Rich*, "sprang from the loins of a Manchester chemist", is me. In *Gemel in London* I am Rubicon. It had to be so, because I have never possessed jot or tittle, scrap or atom of invention. As a child, and desperately resolved to be an

author, I would copy stories because I could not invent stories of my own, and by "copy" I mean sit at a table and laboriously write them out. My essays, in so far as they have any value, are about me. My theatre-books are all about the theatre as I have seen it. All my life I seem to have been "putting myself forward", as my old nurse used to say. One of my earliest recorded utterances was to ask her whether I should ever be king. I am a walking advertisement for modesty. My weaknesses, including that vanity here inescapably foreshadowed, will lie plain on the page. "The correctful thing in all literary books", wrote Aloysius Horn, "is to remember that even the truth may need suppressing if it appears out of tangent with the common man's notion of reality." I shall suppress very little. The reader has already marked the excessive allusiveness—the inability to refrain from dragging in other writers. I cannot help this, and have no intention of helping it. Dryden and Lemaître and Walkley practised discursiveness, and what was good enough for them is good enough for me. At the same time, it is with a pang that I note the entry under my name in Larousse's *Biographical Dictionary* :

Romancier et critique dramatique anglais contemporain né à Manchester en 1877. Outre sa collaboration régulière aux divers journaux littéraires il a publié "L. of C.", "Buzz-Buzz" (a few more are mentioned). Comme romancier, sa capacité d'évocation, la précision de son langage, sont remarquables. Il a malheureusement le défaut du monologue et de la digression qui gâtent le plan et refroidissent l'intérêt (1928).

And so we come back to the French tongue. Yes, I freely admit that Balzac did for me exactly what Greta Garbo does for to-day's butcher-boy. Yet I have a kind of justification which is the modesty of my extravagance. I have never wanted a large house and troops of servants. A flat in town (to be near my work) and a country cottage (to get away from it), somebody to drive a car (because I can't), somebody to cook (because I won't), and somebody to type (which I neither can nor will)—these have been the most of my establishment at any time. I have never had a fur coat and still have qualms

about the second-hand fur collar I bought to go with the second-hand Bentley. In a fit of real extravagance I once ordered a pair of shoes from the King's boot-makers, and justified them to my family on the plea that they were the exact shape of my feet. My brother Edward looked up from some Russian opera he was translating and said: "What the hell! Are they the shape of the King's feet?" I feel I cannot burke the matter of champagne. I do not deny that "Champagne's my wine", as the little shop-girl in Pinero's *Letty* used to say. I drink the stuff because I have to. Champagne exhilarates me, and brings forth such wit as I possess. Mr. Shaw pretends that he can detect the sentence at which Jane Austen broke off to drink a dish of tea. Turning up my old work I can tell where a bottle has been corked.

I have never entered a road-house or bathed in a pool at midnight. I know next to nothing about the new hotels which have broken out all over Park Lane and Piccadilly. I have never played Auction for more than ten shillings a hundred or Contract for more than five shillings, and not often at these stakes. I do not play poker. I do not bet except on the Derby, when I divide ten pounds between three runners. This year, in pursuance of one of my Plans for Future Economy, I cut down the amount by half and, of course, landed both first and second: one of the most irritating things about economy is the way it costs money. My expenditure on pearl necklaces and diamond garters has been negligible. I have never hankered after yachts or grouse-moors, though there have been the ponies. Yet the blame cannot be laid here, for I have proved over and over again, by diagrams, graphs, and the Law of Probabilities, that **THE PONIES PAY FOR THEMSELVES**. Or do they?

Where, then, does the money go? As I write this my eye catches a newspaper column into which that eminent publicist, James Douglas, has emptied the vials of his pity, misericorde and ruth. (What a piece of work is our James! How supple in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving, how Express and admirable!) The article is all about a postal employee caught rifling telephone call-boxes, the condonation put forward being that the man was driven to keep



himself, a wife and four children on sick pay of seventeen shillings a week. My concern is not our James's wrath with the law, but the reader's probable wonder at my finding  $x$  pounds a day inadequate. To this I reply that every tub must come to terms with its own bottom. It does not mend this summer's drought to reflect that we are likely, in the worst event, to be better off than the Chinese in last winter's floods. That other people would never get into my scrapes does not get me out of them. I am as I am. (No doubt a murderer says the same thing.) All my life I have indulged my taste for champagne and ponies. Next to a great actor a harness pony excites me more than anything on earth, and he who drives an excited pen is not to be blamed if he be himself excitable. I have always spent every shilling I could spare, and many I could not, on show horses, and I always shall. No man is entitled to take out of life more than he puts into it; and conversely, I hold that if he is prepared to put back he is entitled to take out.

How much have I put back? In the vulgar scale of quantity I have in the last fifteen years re-invested 3,860,000 words. Roughly, four-fifths of the length of *The Human Comedy*, which took Balzac eighteen years, and an average of close on 260,000 words a year. This is a good deal above Arnold Bennett's lowest, though less than his greatest output; I doubt whether throughout his whole career that master-worker averaged more. In 1908 Bennett wrote: "I have never worked so hard as this year . . . total words 423,500." Well, I can beat this. Between my birthday in 1934 and the same day in the previous year I wrote 502,000 words, most of them critical ones, which means that I used up in compression resulting in one short paragraph the time a novelist would take to slop over half a dozen pages. In addition, in the last fifteen years I have seen something like 3,000 plays and hundreds of films—a pure waste of writing-time that in fifteen years amounts to at least 20,000 hours. The reader is to understand that the foregoing comparison is made solely with reference to industry, and to lend colour to the view that if the labourer is worthy of his recreation as well as his hire I have earned my champagne and ponies.

## RAISING THE BLIND

Fifteen years ago the *Saturday Review* paid me four pounds a week, which I thought was too little. I had no other income. To force myself to earn more money I determined to spend more. This, I understand, is known to economists as the Law of Demand and Supply. That the supply has sometimes lagged a thousand or two behind the demand is not my fault ; I did not invent an obviously imperfect science. Champagne and ponies give me the zest which I give back in my work. When the day comes that I cannot indulge the second of these passions—for at a pinch I can give up the first—that day and every one which succeeds it will be a *dies non*.

## CHAPTER II

### CHILDHOOD

MY sister, when people ask if she is related to James Agate, the critic, invariably replies: "Distantly. He is the eldest of six, and I am the youngest" Her five brothers have never failed to impress upon her that she was an afterthought. I was born on the 9th of September, 1877, at Ivy Bank, Seedley Road, Pendleton. An early recollection is of being patted on the head at Blackpool by a middle-aged gentleman who wore diamond rings over his white kid gloves. The gentleman was Sims Reeves. Pendleton is really a part of Salford, though we liked to think it belonged to Manchester. Pendleton in those days was "good", though not aspiring to the tone of the Eccles Old Road, an aristocratic thoroughfare leading to the suburban district of Eccles where we afterwards resided. Patricroft, farther on, was distinctly low. Here were navvies, and bargees urging on their canal-horses, and people put shoulders to wheel and generally marked themselves off from the world of little gentlemen. Along the Seedley Road in the course of my afternoon walk I used to meet returning from school, making sidelong, crab-like progress with lots of books under his arm, Herbert Sidebotham, for many years night-editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, afterwards the distinguished Student of War, of Politics, and of Anything that Turns Up. No man was ever as wise as Sidebotham looked in those early days. Or even to-day. You do not really know Sidebotham until you have gone racing with him. I remember a trip to Ostend, where I found that my friend on the racecourse was another man. As he consulted his race-card the veins on that bland and noble forehead stood out like ropes. Feverishly with his field-glasses he swept all those parts of the course in which it was inconceivable that animals could be. As the horses went to the starting-gate he broke into heroic



*My Mother*



## CHILDHOOD

sweat, and as they thundered past the winning-post to win or lose his trumpery stake—for he was engaged in what Allan Monkhouse once called the most ignoble of occupations, that of gambling within one's means—he seemed very near collapse. But I anticipate.

My father, who was born exactly a hundred years ago, originally came from Horsham in Sussex. My grandfather was a prosperous linen draper in that town and left my father the sum of ten thousand pounds, with which he established himself in business in Manchester as a cotton manufacturer's agent. I inherited none of my extravagance from my father, who was a man of the simplest tastes, never spent a penny on himself, and never bought a new hat until my mother made him. He brought us all up well, sent us to good schools, and gave us good music masters. He kept the strictest domestic accounts and all his life endeavoured to reduce his expenditure below the two thousand pounds mark, and always failing by a hundred or so. After his death we found that he had succeeded once, and then only by cheating ; he had scratched out his subscription for that year to the Lancashire County Cricket Club and transferred it to the next ! A great theatre-goer himself, he encouraged us to go to the best plays, though insisting that we must be home by eleven o'clock, or at the latest ten minutes past, at which hour he threatened the door would be shut and locked. This rigid rule of my father's meant that we must leave the theatre at half-past ten. This, in the case of *Hamlet* and one or two other extra long pieces, was awkward, and meant a wild drive in a hansom, which could be reckoned upon to beat the sleepy-going horse-trams and cover the two and a half miles in something like a quarter of an hour. Once my father incautiously let it out at the Sunday dinner-table that he had run away from home to see Macready, after which admission we heard no more about the door being closed against us. For years after my father stopped paying for my music I paid for piano lessons out of my own pocket, choosing a German teacher who lived on the farther side of Manchester, whereby, when Vesta Tilley was at the Palace, I could miss a lesson without my parents knowing anything about it. I remember my father taking

me to see Sarah Bernhardt, in, I think, *Frou-Frou*. I remember that while the tears were still running down his face, he told me that Rachel was a greater actress. This detachment proves him to have been a dramatic critic without portfolio.

The artistic bent comes also from my mother, whose maiden name was Young. Her mother was the wife of a wine merchant, a Dickensian figure who appears to have sold no wine and to have spent his life on a sofa with gout and the plays of Shakespeare. My grandparents on both sides died before I was born, and all I know of them is from hearsay. But my mother's mother appears to have been a woman of the most extraordinary distinction. She was the daughter of James Pitt, the dancing-master, whom E. V. Lucas has dubbed the Turveydrop of Manchester. Pitt had been Harlequin at Drury Lane, and had known Macready, who gave him a pair of paste buckles. He was a friend of David Cox and was with that artist when he painted the sign for the Royal Oak at Bettws-y-Coed. My grandmother went to France as a governess, and there is some story of her having been engaged to Guizot, the French statesman, to whom the *Encyclopædia Britannica* gives five pages, without, however, mentioning my grandmother! Showing signs of spinal complaint, she had to recline on a mattress, in which it is alleged she conveyed secret correspondence between the French leader and Louis Philippe. After which it is further alleged that, in consequence of her illness, the engagement was broken off. I have never believed a word of the story, and the dates do not fit. I think it is much more likely that my grandmother taught Guizot's daughter. Returning to England and recovering from the spinal complaint she married the wine merchant, and kept him and her two little daughters by giving music lessons to the Greek colony in Manchester at the extraordinary price of a guinea a lesson—unheard of in those days when the normal tariff was a guinea for twelve lessons, thirteen to count as twelve. When the wine merchant died his widow sent her two children, then in their teens, first to school in Paris for three years and then to another school in Heidelberg for three years. All this time she saw her children only when she visited them, though knowing herself to be attacked by that incurable disease of

which she ultimately died. Admirable woman, who could thus steel herself to a life of hard work and solitude that her children might have a first-class education ! She was, I understand, a tiny creature, of indomitable will and exquisite manners, a mistress of several languages, and a beautiful pianist. We still have the lovely Broadwood on which she taught my mother and my aunt to play, and on which we all learned in our turn, though to preserve it from rude assault a second piano was bought. Even now that the tone has nearly gone, it remains supremely elegant. My mother and my aunt, speaking French to us, taught us to play by the arduous method of holding our hands and pressing down our fingers—a method as tedious to the instructor as to the instructed. When we were in our teens three of us had to knock at our parents' bedroom door at seven in the morning, announce our names and the time, prior to going downstairs and practising piano and violin in three separate rooms, which hideous cacophony they endured for our good.

For years I have been telling everybody that I am descended from Ned Shuter, the original Mr. Hardcastle and Sir Anthony Absolute. Doran's account of this actor is as follows :

Little is known of the origin of Edward Shuter. Small trust can be placed in the report that he was the son of a clergyman—not because he himself was, at one time, only a billiard-marker, or that he could with difficulty read his parts, and had much perplexity in even signing his own name ; but because Ned himself never boasted of it. What is certain of him is, that he was an actor entirely of the Garrick period, commencing his vocation as Catesby, at Richmond, in 1744, and concluding as Falstaff to the Prince, in *Henry IV*, of Lewis, played for his own benefit, at Covent Garden, in May 1776. In June 1746, when he acted Osrick and third Witch in *Macbeth*, Garrick playing Hamlet and the Thane, he was designated "Master Shuter". Thence, to the night on which he went home to die after playing Falstaff, his life was one of intense professional labour, with much jollification, thoughtlessness, embarrassment, gay philosophy, hard drinking, and addiction to religion, as it was expounded by Whitfield. Of all the frequenters of



Whitfield's Tabernacle in Tottenham Court Road there was no more liberal giver than the shattered, trembling, laughing, hoping, fearing, despairing—in short, much perplexed actor and man who oscillated between Covent Garden stage and the Tabernacle pulpit, and meditated over his pipe upon the infinite varieties of life.

Now I take it that there would be much to boast of in such an ancestor. But, alas, my only connection with him is that his wife was my great-great-aunt. The odd thing is that in Zoffany's painting of "Mr. Shuter, Mr. Beard & Mr. Dunstall, in the Characters of Justice Woodcock, Hawthorn & Hodge in the play of *Love in a Village*", Ned looks very like me.

Another daughter of James Pitt, Fanny, married Will Pigot, a comedian, who had three sons. I never saw William. Charles waxed his moustaches and kept a piano shop in Warrington. A more horrible thing about him was that, changing his name from Charles Pigot to Karl Gopti, he took to composing pieces for the piano. Against this must be set the fact that at the age of nine he played a cornet solo before Queen Victoria. Tom Pigot was a brilliant low comedian who changed his name to Percy Milton, and in partnership with Arthur Milton formed the Milton Rays Company, which for years toured the provinces with a burlesque of *Don Quixote*. I still carry in my head the refrain of a song which ran :

I'm a man of the world,  
I'm a man of the world ;  
Fond of sparkling wine, boys !  
Fond of girls divine, boys !  
When with friends, I make the money fly,  
For I'm a man of the world,  
A man of the world am I !

This was sung by Don Quixote's leading lady slapping a thigh of substance. There is, then, in my family a mingled strain of high and low comedy.

My earliest recollection, apart from being perched on a chest-of-drawers for punishment, is of lying in bed in a small room at the top of the house. Up the well of the staircase would come the smell of my father's cigar and the sound of

my mother or my aunt playing Chopin, a Schubert Impromptu, Weber's showiest Rondo, or some ineffable transcript of *Norma* or *La Sonnambula*. I never remember any evening except one which my father spent away from my mother. There was an apocryphal one, in which he was alleged to have come home from the Derby in a coal-truck, to which, on the occasion of their very rare quarrels, allusion by my mother was firmly made. Otherwise he was to be looked for every evening after business at seven o'clock. Once, and only once, he sent a message to say he would not be home. The message was delivered by a cabman, since my father refused to have anything to do with the telephone, and it was to the effect that he was going to the theatre with some old cronies. Next morning at breakfast he told us how, the night before, the play had been interrupted and the manager had come forward to say, "Ladies and gentlemen, Mafeking is relieved." Whenever in our early years we were in trouble we ran to our nurse, to whom at the age of six in the Glory Woods at Dorking I proposed marriage. Last Christmas Day this still-doting tyrant raised her glass to me across the dinner-table and said: "Do you know, Master James, that it is fifty years since you asked me to marry you!"

In due course I was sent to school at Mr. Clegg's in the Clarendon Road, Eccles. I must have been the most atrocious little prig. Anyhow, I annoyed the single assistant master by telling him on my first morning that the French word *pays* was not pronounced "pie" but "pay-ee". Turning up my school reports which have been miraculously preserved, I find some odd things. I find that in one term I was first in form in eight out of nine subjects, but *third in French*. In other terms I did not do so well, and am well prepared to believe that sometimes I was last in arithmetic. A school photograph shows me standing next to Freddie Kenyon, afterwards known as Gerald Cumberland, and in another row is Harold Brighouse, the playwright. At the Annual Concerts I played Harpagon (in French), Portia, Cardinal Wolsey and Bully Bottom. A portrait of my brother Gustave as Titania delighted the family for many years, but has mysteriously disappeared.

At the age of fourteen I was sent to Giggleswick, where I learned a good deal about cricket and not much about anything else. Of the letters I received at school I appear to have kept only one from Gustave. I want to say here, that of all the people I have met in my life my brother Gustave has the most accurate perception not only of things artistic, but of everything else. He may not do things himself, but he knows better than anybody I have ever met how everything should be done. He is a good, though not great, golfer, but in theoretical percipience can make rings round any champion who has ever written a book. In any matter of the theatre I bow to his judgment, and in any æsthetic difficulty have always consulted him. If I may say so, he is to me what Mycroft Holmes was to Sherlock. When Sherlock was at his wits' end to know who had committed a murder he would consult brother Mycroft, who would direct him to some cab-rank and tell him to look in the third vehicle. Gustave is like that, and this is confirmed by a letter written when he was twelve and containing some significant things :

Wasn't it a pity that Mr. and Mrs. Clegg were well enough for the school to open last Monday? Careful and nervous mummy would not let me go because she was so frightened of the influenza (very wise, all the same). I have learned a very pretty piece called "Der Smetterlin"—the butterfly in English. I'm obliged to put it in English because you old fogie, pretending to know French, do not really understand German, Latin, or anything else.

There is an allusion to my "surplis", from which I gather I was in the choir, and then comes this passage :

Please tell me whether there are any violin playing boys in the school *and whether the violin master knows anything at all about it.*

The letter is signed, "Your loving Codfish Eyes and Donkey Ears". At that time four of us had garden plots of our own, and at the end of the summer my parents awarded prizes for the plots which had been kept best. Gustave and I always divided the first prize, because the two next, Edward and Sydney, having to go to bed an hour earlier, had less time for

gardening. Harry was only a tot. When I went to Giggleswick Gustave's garden fell sadly away, and, when the prize-day arrived, was found to be full of weeds. The dear fellow had spent his entire time looking after mine.

My letters home, afterwards found to have been preserved by my mother, are probably just like every other small boy's. I do not imagine, however, that my "careful and nervous" parents were reassured by the statement that

There seems to be nothing to tell you this week, as everything has gone on just as usual. Chicken-pox has broken out in the school.

Or by this :

One of the boys has got ringworm, which only goes to prove what a nice person Miss Duffield is.

And again :

I have got to leave off cricket for a week because of my nose bleeding. The Head Master has just called me into his study and rowed me about my "careless, stupid and preposterously absurd" mathematics paper. Owing to not over-eating, my spots are gradually becoming less.

And then the cloven hoof appears :

I am keeping my accounts carefully and so far have had only three-pence to put down on the wrong side.

It was at Giggleswick that I first became acquainted with the spirit of irony. We were in the habit of scribbling in the lavatories : "67 more days to the holidays," and altering the figure day by day. One night, at last call-over, the head master was very angry about this and said : "Prognosticators may discover that they have made a mistake in their calculations."

Our summer holidays were nearly always spent at Apple-treewick, near Skipton, in Yorkshire, where a farmer with whom we stayed consented to cut a patch of grass before time so that we might play cricket. My father played with us every day, and I have still the score-book in which a careful record was kept of every run made. To while away the wet

days a weekly journal was compiled and written out by hand by me. This was called "The Appletreewick Journal" and was largely an account of our cricket matches, couched in the best reporting style of the day. For example :

Punctually at 2.30, J. Agate, having won the toss, elected to take first knock and sent in Miss Young [my aunt] to face the bowling on a bumpy and treacherous wicket. With the last ball of the first over, E. Agate proved too much for her, and she had to retire. J. Agate came in and began to score immediately. After a few good hits he retired, bowled E. Agate, for a valuable 19. The innings closed for 19. S. Agate commenced batting to the bowling of J. Agate. He played up very pluckily for a valuable 6. With the score at 9 E. Agate succumbed to J. Agate for 3 runs. C. G. Agate played well for 4 runs, the innings closing for 13 runs. Having a lead of 6 runs Miss Young commenced the second innings but unfortunately was again unsuccessful. . . .

May, being only two, was not in either team. Had she been six we should doubtless have utilised her as long-stop. News was hard to come by and the editor had to cast about for such items as:

Everyone will be glad to hear that Mr. Hiram C. Dales still keeps the Burnsall shop.

And :

The almost only thing wanting at Low Hall is a piano. That is the only thing we believe Mr. H. C. Dales does not keep.

In a manner I profited by this. A little way up the road was the New Inn—it is still there—which is half public-house and half farm. In the bar-parlour there was a piano, and as I was terribly in love with the farm-girl who fed the calves and dusted the parlour, I got leave to practise. Whenever it was wet, which was often, I thrummed away for hours at an extremely difficult and florid transcription of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. The alternative was to settle down to the holiday-task, *Old Mortality*, from which dates a life-long distaste for

Scott. Fancy giving a book with this title to a boy who is busy grappling with his father's statement that to bowl to a length is better than merely to bowl fast !

My brother Gustave joined me at Giggleswick in 1892. In the following year, owing to some dispute about health, my father took us both away and sent us to the Manchester Grammar School, to forget about cricket and take to book learning, though not before I had performed at the breaking-up concert and with immoderate brilliance Mendelssohn's "Rondo Capriccioso".

During all these years a great influence in our lives was the annual visit of my father's life-long friend, Gustave Garcia, after whom my brother Gustave is named. Garcia, in whom persisted the tradition of *bel canto*, had a more famous father, Manuel, the centenarian teacher of singing. His grandfather was the great Manuel Garcia del Popolo Vicente, born in 1775 at Seville, for whom Rossini composed *The Barber of Seville*. (This is the name as given in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. A magnificent portrait of the old boy, probably by Ingres, in the possession of his great-grandson, Albert Garcia, bears the legend "Manuel Vicente del Popolo Rodriguez". I have never asked the family to account for this ; to ask any of Garcia's temperament to explain anything is to make confusion worse confounded.) This greatest Garcia, then, had three children : Manuel, who succeeded him as a teacher, Maria, better known under her subsequent name of Malibran, and Pauline, afterwards Pauline Viardot. Gustave Garcia, who was Manuel's son, and my father had as young men been apprenticed to the same wholesale linen-draper ; presently Garcia, discovering that he possessed the family voice, threw up Manchester and went to Milan to study.

Garcia's visits fostered in us that love of debate which made our Sunday dinner-table a battlefield, the clash of opinion starting when the dessert was put on. The "old gang" was composed of my father, mother, their guest, and that aunt who strove so heroically on the cricket field ; we children were the "revolutionaries". We shut our ears to all the older people had to say against Wagner and the "moderns", but had enough sense to keep them open for what Garcia

had to tell us of the great figures of the past. I have heard some of the greatest of the world's singers, but I have never heard anything approaching the colour with which, in my mother's drawing-room, the old man would invest not only Mozart and Lulli but a pretty sweetmeat like Gounod's "Au Printemps". There were the literary associations too. We knew all about De Musset's "Stanzas to Malibran", and how her death was the result of breaking a blood-vessel in the church which was afterwards the Manchester Cathedral. It used to give us an enormous thrill to hear Garcia's: "My aunt used to say . . ." and to reflect that he was alluding to a singer who died before Queen Victoria came to the throne. We knew that De Musset had also celebrated in verse the début of Malibran's sister, Pauline, which happened at the same time as that of Rachel. Garcia never mentioned this aunt without saying, "She is as ugly as a horse." My sister, who as a child was taken by him to see her, talks to this day of her extraordinary charm and bubbling sense of fun. And I have seen a book of her sketches and caricatures of the great figures of the world of art and theatre in the middle nineteenth century which are as witty as the best of Max, and at least as well drawn.

Last we knew that Pauline Viardot, as she afterwards became, had been the dear friend of that great Russian novelist whose *On the Eve* some of us were reading. Gustave Garcia had the head of an old and very angry lion, and I can remember how horribly his moustache prickled when he kissed us, a habit in which he persisted when we were still well on in our teens. His manners were atrocious, he fished hopelessly, bicycled ludicrously, was a great walker, and I have a faint recollection of an unsuccessful, because belated, attempt to climb Snowdon and being benighted with him at Llanberis. But I distinctly remember that next day we visited the slate quarries, where, knowing nothing about them, he gave advice all round. We were all immensely fond of the old man, to whom I owe my understanding of the word temperament.

The reader has marked the name of Rachel. Many years after all I have been recording I was to receive this letter :

## CHILDHOOD

17 Clifton Road,  
Alexandra Park, N.22.  
8.3.28.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

Will you please forgive me for the infliction of this literary intrusion? But on opening my "Daily Express" this morning, I was more than interested to read a review of your new book on Rachel.

My maternal grandmother was one of Rachel's sisters (Lia Félix). My mother, who was born in Paris, spent her early childhood there and of course had a lively recollection of her famous aunt. Subsequently my mother married an Englishman whose name I bear. My grandmother (Lia) died in Paris in 1908 and I stayed with her many times at her flat in the Rue Tronchet. Living also with her was another sister (Dinah) who survived her a few years.

My grandmother had been herself an actress of some note, particularly in the part of Jeanne d'Arc and other rôles, but she was, of course, overshadowed by Rachel. Will you allow me to send you two small prints, taken from original photographs in my possession? One of Rachel taken during her last years and the other of her father—Jacques Félix. The latter was given to my mother by the old man who survived Rachel, and his writing appears on the original as may be seen, together with my mother's name "Jeanne".

I would now ask you to believe me with great respect and sincere admiration

Yours v. truly,  
RALPH CRAWSHAW.

I have a second cousin living in the Rue Victor Hugo, Paris (André Walewski), whose features bear strong resemblance to Napoleon I, as did his father's.

The reader who is interested might like to look up my little book on Rachel, when he will discover that *le père* Félix was in life a character drawn to Balzac's size. It was from Papa Félix that Rachel inherited that trait which gave rise to the often-quoted remark "Other actresses have been Jewesses; Rachel was a Jew".

My little study of the great actress ends: "The mourners at her funeral included Déjazet, Mme Doche (the original



Marguerite Gautier), Jane Essler, Scribe, the two Dumas, Sandeau, Sainte-Beuve, Alfred de Vigny, Mérimée, Augier, Halévy, Théophile Gautier, Murger, and Michel and Calmann Lévy, Balzac's publishers. Alone the Comédie was not represented and for a very simple reason—*le père Félix*. The Comédie had announced its intention of inviting Samson to represent it at the graveside. But *le père Félix* remembered the staircase down which, following demands more preposterous than usual, the professor had kicked him twenty years before. He wrote to the Comédie taking formal objection to Samson's presence, 'prompted to this attitude by sentiments of the highest propriety'. And so the history of Rachel begins and ends with Papa Félix."

While I was getting together my facts about Rachel I came across a copy of a Penny Periodical, published in London about ninety years ago. It had a feature called "The Month's Dramatic Intelligence" from which I cull the following :

"Mendelssohn is having his *Elijah* performed at Birmingham". . . . "Verdi's *Ernani* is to be brought out immediately at Cremona". . . . "Mademoiselle Rachel has been performing before the Queen of Holland at the Hague". . . . "Balfe is at Vienna superintending the production of some of his Operas". . . . "*The Vicar of Wakefield* is in rehearsal at the Gymnase in Paris". . . . "Dumas at his theatre the St. Germain, has produced a version of *Hamlet* with the ghost scene from *Richard III* tacked on to it". . . . "Jenny Lind is singing in Hamburg". . . . "Mademoiselle Rachel has returned to Paris and has promised not to leave that city until she has given a three-months' season of the tragedies of Racine and Corneille". . . . "Scribe is on his way to Bologna to settle details of an opera which he is to write for Rossini". . . . "Mademoiselle Rachel has appeared with terrific success before the Prince of Orange at Amsterdam". . . . "A new opera has been produced at Dresden called *Der Tann Hauser* ; it is the composition of Waghorn". . . . "Mr. Costa will conduct the forthcoming Philharmonic Concerts". . . . "Mademoiselle Rachel at Liège has just received 3,000 francs for five performances". . . . "Liszt is about to set out from Paris for the Crimea and on his return contemplates establishing

an academy for the pianoforte". . . . "Mademoiselle Rachel is arranging to take a long holiday from the Comédie Française and have her salary paid in her absence".

I have no doubt that Papa Félix would have been behind Rachel's peregrinations if it had been necessary. I take leave to think that she had long got past any need for that fatherly spur.

Before me as I write is a large-sized volume containing the entire works of De Musset. This was given to my sister many years ago by Gustave Garcia, and in it he had marked all the passages referring to his aunts, Malibran and Pauline Viardot. That one which interests me most is taken from an article entitled "Concert de Mademoiselle Garcia" published on the 1st January, 1838 :

On the morning of Mademoiselle Garcia's concert and as I was crossing the Pont Royal I saw Mademoiselle Rachel. She was in a carriage with her mother, reading, probably studying a part. I recognised her from a distance, her gentle, serious face deep in thought. I could not help comparing these two young women, both of the same age. One the mistress of five languages and able to accompany herself on the piano with masterly ease and confidence, brilliant, spirited, a dazzling conversationalist, a being out of the same mould as her sister Malibran ; the other a shy, obscure creature whose career and future glory are bound up in the little book now trembling in her hand. Yet, thought I, these two, who perhaps will never meet, are twin spirits. There is a holy bond between them, for they are moved by the same impulses. Yet how divergent the paths that lead them to their appointed destinies ! Mademoiselle Garcia has only to open her lips to gain the admiration of the whole world ; she is a flower whose perfume is music. As for Mademoiselle Rachel, how can that little head know so much of the artifice, the passion and the poetry of human nature ? How immeasurable the task, how miraculous the achievement ! If the God-given genius of Pauline Garcia overflows like a brimming cup, then the genius of Rachel smoulders in the embers which are her eyes. . . .

I cannot help thinking that as the history of Rachel began

and ended with Papa Félix, so the story of me and mine is bound up with those old names . . . Malibran . . . Garcia . . . Rachel. Malibran, dying ninety-eight years ago, came into my world when, at my father's dinner-table, I first heard her nephew speak of her. Pauline Garcia gave my sister her first lesson in diction. Rachel is the subject of my best and simplest piece of writing. Almost it looks as though sometimes the wheel enjoys coming full circle.

### CHAPTER III

#### EARLY DAYS

My father was a Unitarian and came from the stock which founded that particular branch of Nonconformity. The chapel which I attended throughout these early years was at Cross Lane, Salford ; except that it is not ornate, it is one of the ugliest buildings I have ever set eyes on. I remember that the pew-opener was called Adshead. This apparitor, as my aunt insisted upon calling him, looked after the apparatus for heating the chapel, and was the most fearsome of apparitions, many times uglier than Quilp. Whether he or the chapel was the grimier I could never decide. On fine Sunday mornings we used to set out in procession, the two younger boys first, then the two elder, and then my parents, all in our Sunday best. Just before Harry was old enough to form the apex of this crocodile I found the thing ridiculous and I struck. The parson was tall, myopic and underpaid, and with closed eyes would deliver extempore prayers of fifteen to twenty minutes, and sermons of forty minutes in monotone, without gesture. I am sorry to say that I under-rated his mind, which I now know to have been of better quality than his delivery allowed one to perceive. I shall never forget my shock on going one evening into our little-used but very beautiful drawing-room, seeing him on his knees, and hearing my aunt say : " Get up—this is preposterous ! " Let it be recorded that in my teens I was elected secretary of this chapel, and punctiliously performed my duties for three years ! My father was chairman of the chapel committee, and I still have horrific recollection of his principal opponent, who looked like Pecksniff preserved in vinegar, was a kill-joy of the most virulent type, and, I afterwards discovered, might have served as model for Shaw's Sartorius.

My father would not allow us to bring into the house any

books or papers that he considered rubbish. Every Saturday he brought home with him the *Manchester City News*, the *Inquirer*, and the *Saturday Review*. It was this last paper, and the articles signed G.B.S., which made me determine that one day I would be a dramatic critic.

In 1896 I left the Manchester Grammar School. On the final Speech Day in the Free Trade Hall I sang "Forty Years On" with a lump in my throat and, I am told, moved the audience to some kind of tears with a fervid rendering of Don Diègue's speech in Corneille's *Le Cid* beginning :

*O rage ! O désespoir ! O vieillesse ennemie !  
N'ai-je donc tant vécu que pour cette infamie !*

I next went to my father's cotton mill in Nelson, Lancashire, where I learned to weave so thoroughly that to-day I can still run four looms, which is purely an affair of the hand, though I could never make anything of "tackling" or overlooking, which calls for a highly mechanical mind. Even then I cheated, because half the time I concealed in the weft-tin a volume of Archer's translations of the plays of Ibsen. At Nelson I alternated a violent Socialism with my second love-affair. The adored one was a weaver named Rosie.

This was a tragic business, for she developed consumption and had her hair cut off. Her brother and sister ran a hair-dresser's shop, and in the presence of the sister I was allowed to visit Rosie, who was in bed for months. I remember pinning on her nightgown one of the first watch-brooches. Then she got better, and I took both girls to a performance of *The Sign of the Cross*, at which I fell in love with the actress who played Stephanus. This promptly cured me of my passion for Rosie. The same winter I again fell in love, this time with Ethel Sydney, who, in the Manchester pantomime, sang "De Same 'ole Moon am Shining".

In 1897 I left the mill, shedding the Socialism I had perforce contracted. (I had hoped the workers would give me a gold, suitably inscribed watch, but they didn't.) I went to the Manchester office, and have nothing to record for the next five years except that I sold millions of yards of calico,

## EARLY DAYS

earning on commission anything up to four hundred a year. At the age of fourteen I had promised my mother not to smoke or drink till I was twenty-one. I kept both promises. On my twenty-first birthday, being in London on business, I went into the Salisbury Hotel, where I knew my father and mother had spent part of their honeymoon. Here I smoked my first cigarette and drank my first whisky and soda. In 1902, on my twenty-fifth birthday, I was taken into partnership, and my income for the next twelve years was anything between two to close on four thousand a year. This in pre-war times was a large sum for a bachelor, show horses or no show horses. But as early as, I think, 1905, insolvency set in like a wet day.

Hearing that I was contemplating this autobiography, my friend, Fritz Dehn, fished out a letter which I wrote him about this period. I reproduce the letter because it gives some idea of what I must have been like all that time ago. It is precious, but it seems to me to show that I was feeling my way towards becoming a writer. The describing is obviously done for describing's sake.

Cottage Hotel,  
Lynton, R.S.O.  
North Devon.  
Sep. 5, 1905.

MY DEAR FRITZ,

The reason for my sudden return is that M. et Mme Lourdelet are coming to Pendleton on Friday and I've got to be at home. They are bringing with them a young girl of eighteen and I ask myself whether *en contemplant le front noble et presque dédaigneux d'Adélaïde, en regardant ses yeux pleins d'âme et de pensées, respira-t-on, pour ainsi dire, les suaves et modestes parfums de la vertu?*

My health has lately been extraordinarily bad. I have never been quite so nervous, and on Sunday and Monday my depression was awful. I am getting a little desperate. I can't really walk more than twenty-five miles a day and if that won't make me healthy I shall throw my health out of the window through which you have so often flung your financial position.

A German family is staying here, that of Geheimrat Professor Doctor Ewald von Berlin. The daughter has

glorious hair—a copper gold. Sunset through a glass of sherry ! The son has a peculiar disease. His right hand requires bandaging at dinner only ; at breakfast and lunch the bandage is left off and nothing visible. Is this the last thing in evening dress ? The mother does not differ materially from any other mother that I know, and the father is represented by his degrees.

I devoted last night to bridge and lost heavily—tenpence.

I grieve for your lack of certain kinds of knowledge. Otherwise I could tell you that Madame Arnoux (Flaubert) and Dinah de la Baudraye (Balzac) are in Lynton. Madame Arnoux plays Chopin to conjure up ball-rooms, women, in a word, Paris. She spends hours with her children ; I did not know that a woman of forty could blow a soap-bubble so perfectly. I have been unable to scrape up an acquaintance. I strolled into her private room by mistake on my first night here. She kicked me out gracefully. To know about Dinah de la Baudraye, or la Muse du Département, you must accompany me to a dance at the Town Hall. It was there my eye caught sight of Dinah. She is a very thin, angular woman, with a trick of posing three-quarter face and her chin up-lifted. She appears to be perpetually rising to salute the dawn. Entirely draped in the thinnest of muslins, her figure in trying to appear lithe is merely scraggy. An enormous red chrysanthemum echoes a scarlet fan, the only note of colour. She is more virgin than the snow, more artless than the prattle of her child : and yet in another moment the chrysanthemum and fan are in league together in a tremor of excitement. They almost beckon. She asks you for an ice and her head almost touches your shirt. Her deep, husky voice suggests a street corner and a shawl. Poor woman, is her frenzy of abandonment the result of knowledge that her abandonment is worth little ? Her dress, when she moves, taps against her body like leaves upon a dry branch.

I have also met a more than charming woman in a Miss Weigall. She is thirty-five, and has travelled S. Africa, Buenos Aires, Paris, London, and has acquired a knowledge of men. She was perhaps a little too big for me. I said I was in business and she asked : “ Railways or Wheat ? ” She looked lovely in black. Big, broad shoulders, a low voice, black hair streaked with grey, and eyes as wide apart

as a Brahms interval. There was an indefinable something, a touch of distinction in her manner. I talked a great deal with her. She sought me out on the beach next day and talked again. This time she wore white, with a large white cloak, and all the little *colifichets* of a woman of fashion. She introduced me to Atherley Jones, K.C. A perfect burlesque of a man ! Sergeant Buzfuz in a yachting-cap !

How is it that I, who have made love to Diane de Maufrigneuse, and suffered the rigueurs of the Duchesse de Langeais, cannot come on with a simple Devonshire chamber-maid ? Yesterday I plucked up courage to ask her for a collar-stud. She brought me several on the palm of her hand. I selected one with extreme deliberation. I felt dizzy. I invented a little girl I had met in Lynmouth.

"A sister ?" I queried.

"My sister is a woman, sir."

"This little maid was just like you."

"My sister is not a maid, sir !"

"Are you ?" I hazarded.

She ran away like a red-deer on Exmoor, only considerably redder ! She is very, very pretty and a magnificent chamber-maid. I leave my room in a colossal disorder, and it is always newer than a new pin when I come back again. I shudder, when I get into my pyjamas, to think that she has laid them out.

*Toutes les étoiles ont tombé plusieurs fois. Il n'y en a plus ;*  
Ever yours,

JIMMIE.

In the commentator's manner. "To throw one's financial position out of window." A figure of speech denoting a financial state so irremediable that it is not worth bothering about. On one occasion Fritz and I went for a drive in a hansom solely that we might fling both our financial positions not only out of window but out of door.

It was at the end of this year that I wrote an article on one of Robert Courtneidge's pantomimes and submitted it to the *Daily Dispatch*, whose editor not only accepted it but gave me the job of dramatic critic to that paper. The sports editor at that time was Buchanan Taylor, who does such brilliant publicity for Messrs. Lyons—a charming, gay fellow



then as now. I was fool enough to offer to work for a year and accept at the end of the time whatever the paper chose to give me. I wrote forty-nine articles of anything between half a column and a column in length, and on Christmas Eve I received a cheque for seven pounds and a note from the editor saying that he had intended to give me five pounds but had increased the amount owing to the quality of my work! At that time I had a hansom more or less at my beck and call. I forget the driver's name but remember that his number was 33. Anyhow, I ordered number 33 to drive to my tailor's, bought the driver an overcoat with the cheque, and promptly wrote to my editor to say what I had done with the Christmas present. By return of post I got the sack. The following week I tendered my services to the *Manchester Guardian*, which great and noble paper accepted them.

This journal's heyday and that of Manchester marched together. Now that Montague, Mair, Johnstone, and Langford are no more, and Newman and Sidebotham no longer write for the paper, it is not what it was, though as long as Allan Monkhouse, James Bone, Neville Cardus, and Ivor Brown adorn the staff the paper will still be eleven times better informed, better written, and altogether more sensible than any other in the kingdom. In my time Manchester was a city of liberal culture, awareness and gaiety, which it owed almost entirely to the large infusion of German-Jewish brains and taste. Disaster having overtaken the cotton trade, this part of the community is now submerged. Metaphorically grass now grows in the streets of what was once a second capital, actually the famous Theatre Royal has become a picture-palace, and in the place of the cultured Jew reigns the cheap and flashy Yid.

This is the place to say something about C. E. Montague, the paper's Great Man after C. P. Scott. Of all the shocks I suffered when I first came to London, the greatest was that nobody seemed to have heard of Montague. Older men on the staff of the *Manchester Guardian* said that he was a shy apparition—how he would have grinned at such a description through that twisted gargoyle of a mask!—which, glimpsed at the end of corridors, disappeared as soon as anybody hailed

it. Nobody appears to have known Montague better after twenty years than he did after the first half-hour. He was kindness itself, but you had to solicit that kindness. Perhaps this is a misjudgment, because on the occasion of some private sorrow I—who knew him, after all, very slightly—received a letter of extraordinary comfort. It is true that, though he very occasionally gave young writers a pat on the back, he never actually advised them about their work nor, to my knowledge, found fault with them. Throughout the ten years in which I handed him my copy he said nice things about it only once. But then he only interfered with it once, when he wrote a handsome letter saying that, owing to some international event of major importance, he had been compelled to cut my stuff, and would I believe that he had done it with tears in his eyes? He was resolutely determined to let the young writer make his mistakes, and this we attributed to a policy of teaching. It was nothing of the sort. At the dinner given to Montague on his retirement he said straight out that to the work of young writers, or, indeed, of writers of any age, in so far as he might have been an instrument of furtherance he had always been completely indifferent. He confessed that his own writing absorbed him utterly, and that he could not be bothered with any other. Yet I remember a letter in which he once said of a novel of mine which went to pieces in the middle: "Your writing is like stroking a cat the right way. At present the cat's back is broken, but it will mend." One went into Montague's little room at the "Manchester Guardian" office and found him standing at a sort of writing-pulpit, apparently, in view of the intensity of his attention, to you, utterly idle. Yet he was probably in the middle of a piece of pyrotechnics in comparison with which the virtuosités of concert performers are mere rushlights. Next morning, when you read your paper, you realised that you had broken into the middle of some Liszt-like but purely English rhapsody, that the Great Man had stopped in the middle of his soaring octaves, suspended his performance to listen to your futilities, bowed you out, and resumed his passage at the demisemiquaver of his leaving off.

It was Montague's office to serve out the theatre tickets

among the paper's critics. Of dramatic criticism he once wrote that it was "like a ring through the public's nose, the amount of progress achieved being out of all proportion to the grunting and squealing."

The appearance of Bernhardt or Coquelin at the Theatre Royal coinciding with the advent at the Princes of some little farce would be the occasion for a charming note. In this he would explain that nobody had ever written or could ever write quite so understandingly about the French theatre as yourself, but that since his own French was in danger of becoming rusty, would you do him the charity of accepting the seats for *Are you a Mason?* which, he understood, was a topping little farce? And on the following morning there would appear over the well-known initials such a spate of erudition concerning Molière, couched in such torrential wit, that you went hot all over at the double thought of the halting article you would have written, and of Montague reading it. Outside the office I met Montague very little. I often saw him at the theatre in his seat in the middle of the second row of the dress circle, tasting every word with the most intense relish, but looking in his shyness about as amusable as a basilisk.

Many have written finely about Montague, but always as though they were a little awe-struck. Nowhere do I find any allusion to his enormous sense of fun. Yet he who could at any time have conversed with angels was never happier than when twitting the august. Consider his gentle rebuke of the late A. B. Walkley when that colleague admitted discouragement. The article was printed as a leader in the *Manchester Guardian* under the heading "The Mellowing of Mr. Walkley":

"The child—what will he become?" was the heading of a famous illustrated advertisement of an old manual of self-education. On the extreme left of a double series of "cuts" was shown a chubby infant, as yet unappropriated by the angels either of light or of darkness. Thence onwards to the right across the paper were shown successive portraits of this little pilgrim as he might look at various stages of his later life accordingly as he took the primrose path of

dalliance or the steep and thorny road to Heaven. One cannot but think of this heart-searching poster on reading Mr. A. B. Walkley's most readable book of essays, *More Prejudices*, published yesterday by Mr. Heinemann, and comparing it with the book of *Playhouse Impressions* written by Mr. Walkley before the turn of the century. How the cherub has changed ! He comes out now as different from his infant self as either the eventual crossing-sweeper or the climactic churchwarden of the original poster was from its uncommitted child. And yet neither whole-hearted spirits of grace nor whole-hog demons from the pit would seem to have grabbed Mr. Walkley, but rather those cross-bench or mugwump angels who, according to an ancient legend, were neither on the side of Jehovah nor on that of Satan in the day of battle. Was this urbanely unimpassioned pen, one asks oneself, the same that launched a thousand eager skits and burned the topmost towers of that ramshackle Ilium, the anti-Ibsenism of London in the 'nineties ?

As the dramatic critic of the "Star", Mr. Walkley was a very Rupert of debate ; he burned with conviction ; he waved the ideal banner high beyond all precedent ; he strove and cried and even punned with all his might for the cause of good drama. Where is that ardour now ? He still has the wit that we all used to like. He still has read all that dramatic critics should read. He still has the quick perception of false notes and fustian which made him a terror to the stupid and the pretentious. He still can understand, almost without fail, what any sincere artist is trying for. But something akin to what Pater believed to have happened to Botticelli's Madonnas seems to have taken the fire out of this excellent critic. Pater believed that the Botticelli Madonnas were unconcealably weary of their august office—not physically, but from a kind of spiritual revulsion from the overstrain of a mission too exalted for human spirits. And Mr. Walkley certainly presents in these later essays of his a singularly perfect instance of mature disinclination to stick to the fervours of youth. 'Ibsen's plays, once my delight, now stare at me from the bookshelf, forlorn, with nothing to say to me. Thackeray I used to adore . . . to-day I cannot bear to re-open him. Nothing is so disconcerting as this consciousness of 'forsaken causes and forgotten beliefs'." That is the burden. But Mr. Walkley

is not deeply or acutely disconcerted. That would be making too much of the phenomenon of disconcertment. He loves to quote Aristotle, although he has been a journalist for thirty years and must have heard from editors a hundred times that Plato and Aristotle must not be quoted. Well, Aristotle describes the later Mr. Walkley when he says that to a certain admirable type of person "nothing seems so very great". And yet he is always urbane and can still make delicate distinctions between the qualities of many middling things; he can price correctly many various grades of salt, though all of them have lost, for him, their ancient savour. No doubt this is what Hamlet did. At the period when everything in the world—and therefore, presumably, the whole of its dramatic repertory—was stale, flat, and unprofitable, he still contrived to do some highly presentable dramatic criticism, and even to put up a capital case for the classical as against the romantic method of acting. But then it is quite difficult to be like Hamlet in his lighter passages. We certainly cannot think of any other dramatic critic who could be so far as Mr. Walkley is from boring us if the theatre bored him so often as it must bore Mr. Walkley.

Outside the theatre I met Montague once at his own house, once at his father-in-law's, once at a luncheon-party given to Arnold Bennett, and once at a small dinner to Galsworthy. I remember C. E. M. saying afterwards that to have made a joke at that dinner would have seemed like brawling in church. Everybody knows old Nevinson's *mot* about Montague who, in order to scrape into the army, dyed his white hair: "Montague is the only man whose hair, through courage, turned black in a night!" I heard of Montague once during the war; somebody had seen him in a public-house at Scapa Flow eating bread and cheese and with a volume of Milton propped up against a jug of water. The last time I saw him he was in khaki and diving into an A B C shop. I stood for five minutes on the pavement wondering whether I should dive in after him. But I decided that it would have been too uncomfortable; Montague was not only shy in himself, he was the cause that shyness was in other men. I heard of him twice after that. He, who had always been and was



*Myself (left) with Brother Gustave (right) in 1880*



## EARLY DAYS

still the soul of abstemiousness, had so far succumbed to the duty and *convenances* of the trenches as to propose a brandy and soda for somebody else's comfort while breakfast was cooking. The last I heard was a letter saying that the drama had said good-bye to Manchester and that he had given up dramatic criticism. Here is the letter :

10 Oak Drive,  
Fallowfield,  
Manchester.  
11th January, 1922.

MY DEAR AGATE,

What a gift to get from you ! It warms me fine to think I ever counted for anything among you writers on the theatre. I am demobbed from that job now—all the little things I had to say are said, and there is now no theatre here to write about. So, failing both subject and object for dramatic criticisms, I try to fly another kind of kite. But I always look for you in the *Saturday R.* and bless it for disengaging you from yonder "Pan". Anyone who writes well for any paper is an Apollo toiling in the House of Admetus ; but there be Admetuses and Admetuses.

I've read all your book since it came yesterday, and write in a great state of delight such as the right vintages bring. Lamb would have loved all your pages about the horses and pugs—all mellow Lamb themselves, and not pastiches in the least but honourably akin in the spirit. The boxer who, in the distraction of his transport, bit his opponent, is a jewel, but the whole thing reeks with your delight in life and in writing. Also the Sarah B. is a really noble piece of praise, visibly true as one reads, because it has beauty, which can't get into any praise of mean things. But the whole book is a joy.

When you were here I used sometimes to think you worried too much over the rightness of local texture in writing—the *mot juste* and getting the nap of the cloth right, as distinct from the general and total gesture of a piece of writing, its main rhythm of thought and sound. But I withdraw. Your pictures are real wholes now, anyhow, with a centre apiece, and foreground and distance and high lights and low in the stations of life to which it has justly pleased you to call them. Do keep on at the theatre. Nobody else



does it with passion. But do also write another novel with a first half as bewitching as *Responsibility*, and a second half to match it—or am I thinking of my own poor *Morning's War* which just came in two in me 'ands, about the middle?

Thank you kindly for your great present. You make me want more than ever to find out how to write well.

Yours more than ever,

C. E. MONTAGUE.

In this letter I find one last salty smack of that gusto which sent Montague trudging into the raw fogs of Saturday afternoons on the wintry Pennines, striding along the crests of sunlit Alps, and marching to the wicket at that summer game at which he was so inspiring a duffer. It may be that one does wrong to compare one great critic with another, and so I will refrain from saying where in the hierarchy I would rank my master. Montague deprecated comparison, for when Bernhardt died we find him writing :

Was she as great as Rachel?—or as Ristori?—people will ask, with no chance of any answer worth getting, for even now it is an authentic mark of futility in critics that they should argue, as some do, whether Duse or Bernhardt stands higher. You cannot measure infinities against one another, and any artist in whom genius rises as high as it has done in the spirits of these two women partakes, in a sense, of infinity, for it admits you to states of feeling in which there is no less or more, but only a sense of boundless release of heart and mind.

Well, he is gone. And I can only repeat what a leader-writer in the *Manchester Guardian* wrote on the death of Swinburne :

He has been to young men everywhere an intoxication and a passion, awakening half-formed desires, hidden longings and impulses, and secret enthusiasms, and wielding sway more imperiously over heart and sense and soul than any other man of his time did over the intellect or the reason of his disciples. And now that this happy-starred spirit has shot into the spiritual land he will still live in the hearts of those who read his writings, who hate the tyrannies

and the wrongs that he hated, and love freedom and the spaces of earth and sea that he loved.

But I was only third in command on the *Manchester Guardian*. Second in command was Allan Monkhouse, author of the most brilliantly unsuccessful novels and plays that I have ever read and seen. His principal job in life was to report the state of the cotton market for the *Manchester Guardian*. Monkhouse was, and is, the best man I have ever known—the soul of goodness, with a first-class sense of humour. If I had murdered somebody I would sooner confess it to A. N. M. than to any other man. He once came up to me on the Manchester Exchange and said: “So-and-so (a young intellectual) has been explaining to me the Tolstoyan Theory of Non-resistance. He says that if I go home to-night and find some ruffian violating my wife and eviscerating my babes I need not interfere. I asked him whether it would be permitted to walk away!” As an example of A. N. M.’s charity of mind, I would like to cite that occasion when, going together to Old Trafford, we found the Lancashire tail batting. And what a tail! Ever since I have known the Lancashire eleven its tail has begun at the animal’s neck, or say three wickets down. Monkhouse merely remarked, “Well, well. I suppose the worst must have their turn as well as the best.” But he had an astringent irony as when he wrote me during the war: “We have just acquired a crop of local war-knights. Have you seen any of them prancing about the battle-field?” Once at a golf competition at Disley in Cheshire I marked his card, and he had only to do a four at the last hole to win the Captain’s Prize. The hole was about two hundred and forty yards and down-hill, and Monkhouse’s drive was within a dozen yards of the green. He could have kicked the ball up to the pin, but at the critical moment lifted his head and socketed the ball into a pond. Breaking his mashie over his knee and throwing his entire bag of clubs after the ball, he said, “Well, well. Nobody shall say I have lost my temper over a beastly game. Come in and have some tea. The children will be delighted to see you.” His house was close to the last green, and at next morning’s break of day he

was seen padding bare-footed, with his trousers turned up, in the direction of the pond, looking like some noble but slightly shame-faced retriever. For some years I had a mania for tearing up letters, and though I have had many hundreds from Monkhouse all I now possess is one miserable half-sheet :

*Meadow Bank,  
Disley,  
Cheshire.  
Nov. 26th, 1924.*

MY DEAR J. E. A.,

This is a belated but more formal acknowledgment of your sending me *Blue Lions and Pink Giraffes* or whatever it is. I've read it and like it very much. Should I spoil this if I said you're an essayist rather than a novelist? Do you foam at the mouth? If anyone tells me that my plays are better than my novels I think he must be a bit of an ass; if the other way about I feel that he can't see how good my plays are. But some of the best parts of your novels *are* essays. Rogues, horses, actors are good subjects for you, and Edgar Baerlein isn't a bad one. I am myself the most punctillious person there is in saying lawn tennis, but it's pedantic to say it every time and to say tennis when you mean lawn tennis isn't as bad as to say real tennis? I'm glad you don't say it in the essay. Lawn tennis, by-the-bye, is a first-rate game; tennis may be a super-game, but I don't know. I can be dogmatic too.

I'm glad to see what you say about the puppets, and I wish you were in Manchester to stir up our dramatic criticism. Montague rarely goes and he makes a mighty difference. Paddy sends me his notices sometimes—I think he's assistant editor of the Oxford *Outlook*—and, begad, they're better than I could do. So it seems to the fond parent. Yet I think sometimes that if I wrote theatre notices now I could do better than I did.

I'm struggling for health. I was out in the garden to-day for a bit, but I'm rather tottery. I think it's a kind world. I haven't a fair chance to develop cynicism.

Good luck to you. I'm glad to have that book.

Ever yours,  
A. N. M.

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## EARLY DAYS

to publish them must be obtained. Here is the covering letter I received from Monkhouse :

*Meadow Bank,  
Disley,  
Cheshire.  
Sept. 6. 34.*

MY DEAR J. E. A.,

What! Reminiscences? And you a mere boy—not sixty yet. To think that I can give you about twenty years! Nearly all my friends are considerably younger than I. And what a mixed lot they are! I was always a bit stiff and prudish, wasn't I? Well, I believe you've helped me to be less priggish than I might have been. And I cannot class you among the raffish youngsters. We've had our disputations over the (Ahem!) Good and Beautiful and haven't always been so very far apart. I grow old: "Light thickens, and the crow makes wing to the rooky wood." One's faculties become slightly blunted all round and we must try to persuade ourselves that this is growing mellow. I hope and believe that you've yet a lot before you.

Reminiscences indeed! You ought to be writing sonnets. Once I wrote a sonnet myself. I ground it out "with care, difficulty and moroseness" to spontaniety (or thereabouts). As a literary man I've had a hard life. I've had to grind things out. And now I feel sometimes that if I had anything to say I could say it. One feels a certain pride in topping seventy-six and being able still to produce a briskness of manner. But the young men will be so damned respectful. Sometimes I beg them to treat me as a human being.

Reminiscences! I've just been reading Grant Richards's. Not a bad book, let me tell you. He recalls a dinner that Filson Young gave us at the Midland; Tom Young and John Scott were at it too, and, incredibly, Michael Davitt joined us. I suppose it's about thirty years ago, and we're all alive except Davitt. That's remarkable, for friends keep dying in the most unnecessary manner and we must stick to those who are left.

All good wishes from your old friend

ALLAN MONKHOUSE.

In 1910 I went to live on a farm at Chapel-en-le-Frith in Derbyshire, whereby hangs the tale of my greatest love—that for the show pony. It was at the Bakewell Show of 1911 that I caught the fever of the show-ring. It was there I first saw the late William Foster's ponies, Mel-Valley's Flame, Mel-Valley's Fame, Mel-Valley's Fume, and Mel-Valley's King George. I write down the names in an effort to recapture the first wonder of these marvellous little heroes of the ring, actors in bronze and amber, bettering, in verve and "attack", any stage-player that I had ever seen. Straightway I decided that I too would show a pony. The following year at the same show I was the delirious exhibitor of a marvellous three-year-old filly. "In some perfumes is there more delight," says the poet, "than in the breath that from my mistress reeks." But no boudoir ever reeked more agreeably than that filly's box! We sat up the greater part of the night before the show washing her four white stockings and doing up in the approved show-ring fashion her charming little mane. "My mistress when she walks treads on the ground." Not so my pretty. She was fire and air at home, and was to be fire and air in the show-ring on the morrow. She was to go mountains high, with dash, pace, poise, balance, rhythm, to be pulled in after a single tour of the ring unquestionably and indisputably the winner. It was my first show.

As the shiversome little beast stood outside the ring ready for the fray, the lad and I, trembling with pride, stripped the rugs off for the inspection of a well-known and friendly critic. "She would look well," said the great authority, "in a pie!" Before I could fathom the profundity of that dictum we were in and out of the ring, seventh in a class of seven.

I have known three great moments in my life. The first was when I won two firsts at the London Hackney Show at the first attempt, the three-year-old fillies in hand and the novice under fourteen hands in harness, both with Rusper Maryan. The second was when I won the championship at the Southport and Ormskirk Show with First Edition (13.2), against Haddon Marphil (15.2) belonging to the redoubtable Philip Smith. This was a big ring and a cinder track, and

the judge was my stud-groom's father ! But I repeated the win next day at another show, on a small, uneven grass track, under another judge, and again wrested the championship from Haddon Marphil. The third great moment was when in 1919 I was invited to be one of the judges at the Hackney Show, held in that year at Newmarket, and came over from France to do so.

Among the ponies which I sold when the war broke out was my little mare Talke Princess. There still hangs over my desk a picture of Princess in her harness as she lived. Foaled in 1909, as a two-year-old she cost me one hundred and fifty guineas—my life's savings at the time. During the next three years she won all before her in the show-rings of Lancashire and Yorkshire. In March, 1914, I sold Princess for three hundred guineas to a banker at Lille for his daughter to drive. Soon afterwards the little girl fell ill, and the banker wrote asking me to buy the mare back. Alas ! I had filled her place and could not scrape together more than eighty pounds. I wrote her owner this and told him how to put the mare out to grass, and how to winter her. But the banker was obdurate, and finally I received a cable saying that Princess had left for England, and would I send the cheque ? I went to meet her at the little Derbyshire station on one of the last days of the July of that ill-fated year, and I remember how she whinnied with delight at every step of the road home. A week later the Germans entered Belgium, and a month after that I must give up my ponies. So Princess went to Crewe sales, where she fetched seventy guineas. Mr. Henry Gilding, a Liverpool magnate, bought her, put her to Southworth Swell, and a year after sold her with her foal to the late C. F. Kenyon, the North Country racehorse owner. This foal was the world-famous Axholme Venus, the loveliest harness pony ever shown, unconquerable in this country when at her best, and now, of course, in America, where all our masterpieces go. I was at Crewe when Mr. Kenyon, shortly before his death, put up his stud for sale. Venus was withdrawn at two thousand five hundred guineas—a price never before asked for any harness pony. And it was at this figure that she ultimately crossed the Atlantic. I make no excuse

for this talk of prices. Price is the essence of a deal, and during these years well over a hundred animals passed through my hands.

At one of my earliest visits to Crewe sales, incensed at a bid of thirty-five guineas for an animal for which I had paid eighty guineas some weeks previously, I plunged into the straw, vowing to buy the next animal put up. This, partly out of pique and partly on the principle that a bad day to sell is a good day to buy. A creature of unknown sex, age, height and soundness—I could only see the tip of her ears—was promptly knocked down to my bid of twenty-six and a half guineas, and for five years my absurd purchase was a better friend to me than all the show horses I ever owned! She had nearly every fault of conformation and most unsoundnesses, but her temper, intelligence and courage were better than those of most humans. She would stand twelve hours' gruelling among the Derbyshire hills and finish on her hind legs; she would do forty or fifty miles a day in tireless succession; she would strip her harness if I so much as clicked at her; and she would wait at village inns unattended for hours, finally, when she judged my stay long enough, tapping at the snugger window with her nose. She did not, like the modern show horse, need cocaine to give her courage and turpentine to free her shoulders and lift her hocks. Vivianette wore herself so grandly in leather that in the streets, as she went by, old horsemen would snatch at their hats, and children pause in their games to stare. She was by Lord Hamlet, by Lord Derby II—a trapper only, and the best animal I ever owned. A bright bay, 14 h. 3 in., she had in overwhelming measure that supreme quality of man and horse—pluck. When I think of this little mare I have no patience with the fool who says either that the Hackney lifts up his feet and puts them down in the same place—let him try one of this sort in the Peak district—or that the breed lacks staying power.

Since the war I have made two more entries into the showing. The third, last and present entry will be recounted in its proper place. The second entry happened round about 1919. I was going somewhere, and, having to wait some hours at Peterborough, looked about for the means of amuse-

ment. On the station platform I saw a notice of a sale of cab horses. I went to the repository and discovered that one of the lots was a Hackney gelding, half-starved, a giant measuring seventeen and a half hands and with promise of terrific action. None of the previous lots had fetched more than nineteen guineas. When I began to bid for Camouflage the assembled dealers seemed to think that I must know something, with the result that I had to go to sixty-five guineas for him. Thus I was inveigled into my second bout of showing. I showed the horse at Olympia, thought him worth four hundred pounds and quite honestly insured him for that sum. I kept the horse in Yorkshire and turned him out to grass to be a better animal the following year. Three weeks after the Olympia Show I got a letter from the man who was looking after him to say that the gelding was behaving in the oddest fashion. He had turned moody, and would stand all day in a ravine up to his hocks in water, and on one occasion he and some of the farm hands had had to drag him out of the water. The wretch, which would have nothing whatever to do with the other animals, was put into a field where there was no ravine and no water. Three days later I got a wire saying that he had committed suicide by drowning himself in a three inch rain-puddle which had collected by the gate. They found him lying in it, and upon being opened up his lungs were found to be full of mud and water. The Insurance Company paid up like gentlemen.

A friend of mine, a jeweller and pawnbroker, was always fond of a horse with a bit of "risk" attached to him, and I knew this when I bought a lovely fifteen-hand chestnut mare, four years old, with great liberty and elegance. I called her Haunting Melody, after Jen Latona's song, and won a championship with her at Hornsea when she had a temperature of one hundred and five. Do as I would, I could not get condition on her, and that, of course, was why my friend had let her go at one hundred and eighty pounds. I think I bought her because of an extra good lunch, because of the grand view from my friend's drawing-room windows—a view which I was persuaded somebody had pawned with him—and because I can never resist temptation. At Hornsea a friendly vet told



me that the mare was dicky. I was beginning to tire of feeding her on milk, eggs and port, and so sent her to Crewe, where she fetched two hundred and forty guineas from the late owner of Scott's Restaurant. Now her previous owner never told me what he fed Melody on, and equally there is nothing in the horse-code which obliged me to shout at the sale what the mare's diet had been. She died a fortnight after she left my hands.

Hereabouts I bought a handsome yellow gelding because it disliked trains and had gone over a hedge twice. He was put up for sale at Crewe with this fact advertised and the lot offered merely as "a horse". I paid forty guineas for him and he behaved perfectly for six months, at the end of which time he ran away with me *at a walk*! It seemed that this was the catch about him. You could cut his mouth an inch deep, but you could not stop him and he went on running away at six miles an hour! I sent him back to Crewe and he again fetched forty guineas. That seems to have been his regular price, and everybody in the North of England had him in turn. He was a good-looker and no mistake. One bitter mid-winter night a valuable pony arrived at my place unexpectedly. All the boxes and stalls were full and so I turned this chap into a field. Except that in the morning he had turned blue, he seemed to feel no ill effects whatever. After the failure of my shop, to which I shall come in a later chapter, I was forced to sell out for the second time.

A wit has said about card-playing that it is at least free from hypocrisy—"Nobody pretends that gambling improves the breed of cards." I am not going to pretend that I like the show harness horse because he can bring guns into action, cart muck, or carry a load of trippers. I admire him in the way that I admire an Irving or a Talma. To praise one racehorse because he runs faster than another is to me like praising one actor because he can gabble quicker than another. In the ring your show horse is *an actor* of whose performance the audience may judge, since the spectator has the means of forming an opinion equally with the man in the ring. From the infinity of time spent by hunter judges in riding each exhibit it is obvious that their awards are

largely determined by the feel of the horse and the way he goes under them—which is a secret not shared by the man at the ringside. But there are no secrets in a harness class. Broadly speaking, the Hackney shows the ring-sider the whole of his performance, whereas the hunter must leave half to be guessed. You might put it that each harness class is a mystery to be solved of which the clues are publicly exposed. It is this spectacular exhibition of each horse's merits which makes for the superiority in popular excitement of harness as against hunter judging.

Readers must try to understand that it is not a sign of lunacy to become victim to this passion.

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,  
Some in their wealth, some in their body's force ;  
Some in their garments, though new-fangled ill,  
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse ;

Every humour hath his "adjunct pleasure" and, as I have already said, I find my "joy above the rest" in the fact that the show horse in action is an actor. My better justification is that my love of horses has stood up against the injuries of time.

I think it is only fair to admit that, in the early years of my showing, my attention to the business of selling grey cloth was perfunctory. It was equally perfunctory when I was writing dramatic criticism for the *Manchester Guardian*, since I would wait up till four in the morning to see my proofs, and no man is in a condition to sell anything with enthusiasm if he has been up half the night before. Nor will I deny that I was writing dramatic criticism and showing the ponies at the same time ! Perhaps it may fairly be said of me that no dramatic critic has ever showed better ponies, and conversely that no exhibitor of ponies has written better dramatic criticism. It is significant that my biggest winner was named First Edition. Let me be firm and say that no dramatic critic with a taste for horse-flesh has ever sold calico with a more accomplished pretence at industry.

## CHAPTER IV

### GROWING UP

AT this point I would like to say something about the Manchester Repertory Theatre, whose rise and fall I witnessed. Indeed, I have long decided that if ever I write another and last novel it will be entitled *Grandeur et Décadence de Miss Horniman*. When I was a boy Manchester had only two theatres to which really nice people went. Even so, niceness was governed by certain hard and fast rules. The wealthier merchants sat in the stalls, because their trade was wholesale ; the retailers, including the richest of grocers and fish merchants, were to be looked for in the dress circle. The grey-cloth agents, in so far as I remember, did not rise to the ground-floor level, though my mother after she had been married some years put her foot down firmly and insisted that her seat should always be in the fourth-row stalls four from the end, in case of fire. The two really good theatres were the Royal, in Peter Street, where Irving and the heavier drama had their habitation, and the Prince's, in Oxford Street, the home of Robert Courtneidge. Londoners know nothing about pantomime as Courtneidge purveyed it. I have before me the programme of his fifth Manchester production, that of Christmas, 1900 :

### ALADDIN

ALADDIN . . . . .	Miss Ada Reeve
THE WIDOW TWANKEY (his Mother)	Mr. George P. Huntley
ABANAZAR (a Magician) . . . . .	Mr. Horace Mills
EMPEROR OF CHINA . . . . .	Mr. George Graves
PRINCESS EN-CHAN-TING (Daughter of the Sun)	Miss Madge Crichton
YU-BU-TEE (Daughter of the Moon)	Miss Alice Lethbridge
CHEEKEE (the Princess's Slave) . . . . .	Miss Amy Height

Alice Lethbridge was a beautiful dancer of the ramrod school. Amy Height was a full-blooded negress, who used to get ten and twelve encores for her song "Ma Tiger Lily". The following year she sang "De Tennessee Christ'nin'". Such songs are no longer written; the lilt has vanished with the musk. Conrad Tritschler was Courtneidge's pet scenic artist, and his settings were exquisite. Over the way was the Comedy Theatre, a dingy hole where, during the pantomime season, it was whispered that patrons could drink behind the scenes and wink at the pretty ladies. There was a court case, and I believe the allegation was disproved. If so, so much the better for Manchester morals; if not, one could at least reflect that in this respect Manchester made its nearest approach to the French stage of Halévy's delightful *Madame et Monsieur Cardinal*. There was also the Queen's Theatre, at the bottom of Peter Street, given over to melodrama and at Christmas to Flanagan's Shakespearean revivals, at which I once saw Mrs. Charles Calvert and very often Louis Calvert. These four were all the theatres there were, and, Manchester being a small town, the audience was always pretty much the same audience. An early book of mine, put together at a time when I thought all writing must be fine writing, has this passage:

In London it is still possible to imagine an excitement of the auditorium as distinct from the interest of the scene. You would not swear that the blond, adventurous, tired exquisite on your right will not with a bullet put an end to the *ennui* of this and all other evenings. It is not certain that the admirable doll on your left will not figure in next day's *faits divers*. In the gallery some budding assassin leers at his patron in the stalls, beneath him Des Esseintes supports a shaky Iorgnon, Valmont eyes a malicious Madame de Merteuil, the Courpières and the Coutras abound. . . .

In the provincial theatre everybody knows his neighbour or divines him, and there is scant sense of peril. Stalls and circle do a daylight business together. The whistler in the gallery is your butcher-boy, the giggler in the pit your washerwoman. Every member of the audience would appear to be in possession of a passport of respectability visé'd by the police. There is not an emotion in the house

that would surprise you ; political tracts in the guise of novels are thumbed in the intervals.

When I wrote that, I had never attended a first-night in London. If I had, I would have known that "the blond, adventurous, tired exquisite" would as like as not turn out to be Mr. Willie Clarkson, not in the least bored, and thinking of anything but revolvers, and "the admirable doll" a theatrical dressmaker wondering when the frocks would be paid for.

Then came the Midland Hotel, and whoever built it had the odd notion that it should contain a theatre, presumably because on the site a concert hall had stood. I remember as if it were yesterday the Christmas Eve opening with *Mr. Pélissier and His Follies*. Of all rare and exquisite buffoons, Pélissier was the nearest approach to Yorick. He *was* Yorick. But London soon claimed the Follies again, and Manchester, looking round, found Miss Horniman. Or I will put it that Miss Horniman, looking round, found Manchester. I first saw this admirable lady in the foyer of the Midland Theatre, wearing a dress of sage-coloured brocade and a corsage covered with green dragons. Presently Miss Horniman took over the old Comedy Theatre, which was given the new name of the Gaiety Theatre—an unfortunate choice in view of repertory gloom to come. At first all went well. Manchester folk were getting a little tired of waiting a year for Mr. Pinero's latest success, and here was a theatre of their very own, ready to put on the latest blossomings of contemporary dramatic thought. My newspaper-cutting book shows that during those first two years Miss Horniman's company, under the direction of Iden Payne—news of whose accession to the managerial chair at Stratford-on-Avon is to hand as I write—produced the following plays : Shaw's *Widowers' Houses*, Rostand's *Fantasticks*, McEvoy's *David Ballard*, Houghton's *Independent Means*, Hankin's *Return of the Prodigal*, Galsworthy's *The Silver Box*, Masfield's *Nan*, and Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, while hospitality was given to Irish and French players and the Vedrenne-Barker Company. It was in *David Ballard* that I first saw that mistress of domestic

pathos, Clare Greet, of whom in this piece Shaw said that if she blacked her face and stood on her head she would still be perfect. My first cutting-book is silent on the subject, but my recollection is that one of the earliest performances, if not the first, at this theatre was Stanley Houghton's famous *Hindle Wakes*. Now this is a very notable list, and all would have been well but for two factors, which, in my view, are inherent in the very nature of repertory theatres. These are, the tendency of the repertory theatre to edify rather than to entertain, and the settled conviction of a repertory audience that repertory drama is something for which one does not dress. Brains on one side of the curtain and frumpishness on the other will, in the long run, ruin any theatre. This has been proved over and over again, and up to now only William Armstrong and the City of Liverpool have disproved it. The whole justification for an intellectual theatre is the production of plays which cannot get a hearing on the commercial stage, plays which cannot draw a house. In that foreknowledge the house refuses to be drawn. This means the employment at modest salaries of repertory actors, which again means celebrities on the down grade or beginners who have not yet climbed.

The *Manchester Guardian* critics championed Miss Horniman's venture, doughtily, wittily, and whenever they honestly could, and I have a lurking suspicion that I saw its faults a little too clearly. However that may be, I am persuaded that its best work was done between 1907 and 1912, and that when the enterprise was finally abandoned success had gone out of it. I was always more interested in things which had the stamp of London about them, and perhaps there is no harm in saying I was responsible for the first performance ever given in Manchester of Ibsen's *Ghosts*. Which came about in this way. In a revival of *King Henry IV, Part II*, at I forget what theatre, I saw the late Courtenay Thorpe in the part of Prince Hal, Justice Shallow being Laurence Irving. This was the first time I had seen real tears shed on the stage and, being doubly impressed, I composed a highly appreciative notice of Thorpe. He wrote to me and invited me to supper at the Midland Hotel. I accepted the invitation, and still

remember the shock of his appearance, for he looked like some pale symbol and gaunt effigy of rejuvenation, whose age it was impossible to guess. His complicated make-up, including an auburn wig, held together what remained of a marvellous, strange, and *quattro-cento* beauty, glassy and unalive. Ellen Terry begins a letter to Shaw: "That work of art, Thorpe, haunts me!"

The shock of Courtenay's first appearance is, I repeat, with me still and I have known only two others to equal it in magnitude. The first was when, having invited Esmé Percy to supper at a hotel in Sheffield, I saw that cherub *un peu équivoque*, as Sarah used to declare him, walk into the coffee-room in the cherry-coloured velvets and satins of Piers Gaveston, declaring that he had had no time to change and that "anyhow, Sheffield would be none the worse for a good startling". Percy in those days was equivocal in the sense that just as Ainley resembled a young archangel, so Sarah's protégé was like an amour on a ceiling. The other jolt to the nerves was years later. I had been thoroughly shaken by a performance of Strindberg's *Spook Sonata* and was sitting at supper in the Savage Club. There was nobody else in the room, except, in the shadows by the fireplace, old Odell, with a burnt-out cigar in his mouth and wearing his black hat. Presently the old man rose and on his way to the door disappeared behind a screen, *from which he did not emerge*. Five endless minutes elapsed, after which the old man came forth and, gliding through the door, crumbled downstairs. Thorpe was half Percy and half Odell, and not quite either.

It was at supper at the Midland Hotel that the project was first mooted of giving a performance of *Ghosts* with Janet Achurch as Mrs. Alving. Or was it? My memory for dates, and whether one thing preceded or followed another, has always been a little vague, and presently I was to see Thorpe under the management of Charles Charrington and Janet Achurch. They were giving performances of *Candida* in, I think, the concert hall which had formerly stood on the Midland site. (After the first performance, and being entirely flummoxed, I wrote to Mr. Shaw asking whether the Rev. James Mavor Morell was sincere. In reply I received this

post card : "Of course Morell is sincere ; but the fact that he is a clergyman of the Established Church does not prevent him from being a fool.") It may have been after one of these performances that the subject of *Ghosts* was first mooted. Anyhow, I offered to collect sufficient guarantees to make possible a handful of performances in the lecture hall of the Manchester Athenæum, the guarantors in all cases being the German merchants who were my customers. The production was an enormous success.

After this Courtenay and I became great friends. He had always been in the van of intellectual progress in the theatre, and Shaw's praise of him as an actor, recorded in his dramatic criticisms, was unstinted. He was the best Ghost in *Hamlet* anybody ever saw. Most ghosts talk with the voice of a starving man ; Thorpe's utterances were those of one who is beyond the reach of this world's food. He was an extremely good Torvald in *A Doll's House*, and underlined the fastidiousness which most exponents of the part overlook. His Duke in *Measure for Measure* was something to marvel at for dignity of presence and beauty of voice. He often told me that he was an admirable low comedian, and did indeed produce photographs to prove this. I learned a great deal about acting from him ; in fact, all I know about acting was instilled into me by my father, by Garcia, and by Courtenay. Incidentally, owing to an accident with a gun, Thorpe was minus half a hand and had to wear a contraption which, though one overlooked it in private life, could not but be remarked on the stage, since it necessitated the continual wearing of a glove. When he was not playing—and he did not play often, since his ghostly aura made him unacceptable in modern plays—he was engaged in the business of antique-dealing, though the sight of him in his shop in Ebury Street made his oldest treasures look modern. Scores of times I gave him my second seat at the theatre, which was a treat for him, since he pretended that he could not afford theatre-going, and a lesson for me. He used to write me long letters, in handwriting which was at once elaborate, playful and sinister, saying where I had gone wrong about the merits or demerits of the players. After the theatre he would drive me home to his lovely little house in Pimlico,



where in beautifully chosen accents he would talk far into the night. I remember him saying of Olga Nethersole: "She fills her cup too full. But that, my dear Agate, is hardly a fault in a day when most cups are empty." He had a favourite story of being with Sarah in a box at a New York theatre. The play was *Camille*, as the Americans call *La Dame aux Camélias*. A fashionable actress, who had insisted on Sarah's presence, had sweated through the letter scene and was bowing up at the box to which all eyes were turned. Sarah leaned forward, radiated graciousness, put her gloved hands together, and murmured beneath her breath, "*Cochonne ! Cochonne !*"

It was after one of Thorpe's little supper-parties that Ellen Terry asked for a cab—not a taxi, but an old-fashioned growler. All muffled up, and with her spectacles on, Ellen said in that voice which was like the heart of a red rose, "Boost me in, Courtenay." At which the cabman said, "H'and the lidy as I 'ave the honour of driving h'is Miss H'Ellen Terry. I ain't seen yer, Mum, since you was at the Lyccum in *The Amber 'Eart*—'eighty-seven I think it was." Ellen beamed, and turning to Thorpe said with a delighted gurgle, "There now, Courtenay, I told you I hadn't altered." Thorpe had decorated the house himself and there were mirrors costing hundreds of pounds, in which it is inconceivable that he dared ever look, and a grand piano in ebony and gold on which I never heard a note struck. To see a picture he once took me into his bedroom, and I was horrified to observe a bed of scarlet lacquer and hangings to match inevitably calling up some *belle marquise* in ruins. I hope I am not being unkind, for he was a great friend. In one of my early crises I unburdened myself to Courtenay, knowing that he would not think I was endeavouring to become a borrower. All he said was, "Take me to the theatre to-night." Which I did. When I sat down to supper a cheque for a hundred pounds fell out of my napkin. He was amazingly generous, and in other ways than money, and I never heard him say an unkind or uncharitable word of anybody. A *raté* as far as theatrical success goes—though he made a great deal of money out of the antique shop—he exhibited no jealousy

whatever of his successful rivals. On a day in April, 1927, I rang him up to ask how he was, and a sepulchral voice said: "Dying". Nobody was allowed to see him, and a few days later he was dead. The doctors talked about his being seventy-eight, but I feel that he was very much older. Courtenay always looked either twenty-four or eighty, generally twenty-four, and never anything between. His last letter to me was dated the previous January:

8 Bloomfield Terrace, S.W.1.

27.1.27.

The spirit moves me to write a few words to you—I don't know why, but I suppose it is because I never see you now. I do not think we have corresponded since you wrote your criticism of *Macbeth*. I thought it a wonderfully perfect thing, showing people, and the Macbeth himself, how bad he was, and yet your pen was not unkindly. I hear that Carter [who was playing Macbeth in a subsequent revival] is too awful, but I feel somehow as if in seeing him one would see *something*, a reading, perhaps wrong, certainly badly done—but something. With the other there was nothing—a wax figure wound up to say everything—pious outbursts, exultant cries, haunting soliloquies—all in exactly the same tone and tempo. And I have a sort of idea that Sybil, acting with and against Carter's Macbeth, would be finer than with the thing of straw she had before.

Probably I shall be too *vieux jeu*. Playgoers of to-day will not sufficiently remember the stir I made many years ago, and the show was scarcely important enough for it to be considered worth while to have a paragraph in the papers when I am gone. But the sentimentally inclined might be interested to know the last words I ever spoke on the stage—a little verse that I wrote in for my death-scene as St. Francis, and which I sang to a little tune that I made up.

Jesus, my dearest Lord, Mary, my Queen,  
I hear your voices call from the unseen;  
Stretch out your hands to me, on you I lean,  
Jesus, my dearest Lord, Mary—my—Queen.

Then died.

One man wrote saying the three greatest death-scenes he

had ever seen were Irving's Louis XI, Sarah's Marguerite, and St. Francis.

Yours,

COURTENAY THORPE.

I quarrelled with Courtenay once, and he was in the right. We used to run over the part of Hamlet together at three in the morning ; by the fretful glare of candles he would act some of the scenes for me. He said that he had a new interpretation based on the line, "the undiscover'd country from whose bourn No traveller returns". "But", argued Courtenay, "the ghost of Hamlet's father has just returned, so that Hamlet can't really mean this line. When I get to it I shall look over my shoulder knowing that the ghost is behind me. I shall do it like this." He then spoke the line looking over his shoulder with a face which distilled me, as Horatio says, "almost to jelly with the act of fear". "Now, Agate," he went on "I put you on your honour never to divulge what I have just told you. If you do I will . . ." He broke off there, but I felt sure he was going to say "haunt you". I promised. Some three years later I was lecturing in Glasgow and, knowing that Courtenay would now never play Hamlet, I instanced this treatment of the line as an example of the new renderings of Shakespeare that are still possible. My lecture was not reported in the Glasgow papers at any length, yet next evening at supper he turned to me and said, "Agate, you have betrayed me. I do not want to discuss the matter, but I shall never forgive you." When he died I found that he had left me an ivory walking-stick which I had often admired. I was always rather afraid of this stick, and fancied at times that it would walk about the house of its own accord. One day it disappeared.

Thorpe's strange and compelling magnetism considerably displeased my father, but not my mother who invariably spoke of "that nice Mr. Thorpe". He used to tell her anecdotes about his long apprenticeship with Irving. It was through Thorpe that I came to know personally Mrs. Langtry and Dame Madge Kendal. I told Mrs. Langtry how I remembered seeing her on the sea front at Scarborough when I was a boy and thinking her the most beautiful woman

I had ever seen, and how I had not changed my opinion. She asked me if I would like to have a photograph, and Courtenay whether she should write anything besides her name. Courtenay, piqued because she had not offered him a photograph, said, "You might add 'matchless for the complexion'."

The call we paid on Mrs. Kendal was in honour of her birthday, which, after the manner of Royalty, she was spending quietly at home. Like Queen Victoria, Dame Madge has the knack of looking at once august and homely. It was a bitterly cold day and she was largely concealed in a plaid shawl, so that over the top of the tea-cosy there was little to be seen except her great eyes. After a time the talk turned on *The Lady of Lyons*, which I said I had seen played some years previously. "You have seen WHAT?" said the awful voice, all in capital letters. "Courtenay, do you think you can remember some of it?" Discarding her shawl the old lady then threw herself into the part of Pauline, and I think I have never seen such an exposition of young love as she gave at that tea-table. She told us how that morning she had been down to rehearse at, I think, Drury Lane. "Rehearse?" I asked incredulously. She replied, "Yes. I have to make a speech there to-morrow, and as I have never acted on the stage of that theatre I wanted to know exactly how to pitch my voice. So I went down to Drury Lane, walked to the place where I shall stand to-morrow, and said to the charwomen cleaning the gallery: 'Ladies, can you hear me?' They said, 'Yes, Mum.' I said, 'Can you hear me perfectly?' and they said, 'Yes, Mum.' So now I know I shall be all right." This seems to me to be a staggering illustration of the thoroughness of the old school, as opposed to the casualness of the new. Your modern chit is too busy having her finger-nails lacquered and her toe-nails japanned to bother about such a triviality as making herself heard.

My greatest recollections of playgoing in Manchester are the following:

The visits of Irving, who, despite all his mannerisms and faults, impressed me as so utterly outstanding and pre-eminent that all the other actors I have ever seen have seemed to be

practising some other profession. "To men who court a familiarity with terror he offers at every moment new materials for astonishment and pleasure, and they gaze upon his terrible delineations in mute and marvelling delight. The cavern of a magician is not more silent than the theatre when this great enchanter awakens the furies and calls up the passions from their dark abysses in the human heart. His delivery of the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy was at once solemn and abrupt. The pauses were long, but the utterance was sudden and occasionally precipitate. There was earnestness and an impatient curiosity in his investigations of the mysteries of the grave, which he seemed to open and search like one looking for its secrets, like a treasure, in its dark and impenetrable depth. Yet there was no loss of dignity in this impassioned scrutiny. He was more swift than hurried. His images appeared to pass, like the shadows of rapid clouds, over an elevated mind. He seemed to spring with one bound over the dark borders which separate us from futurity, and to traverse vast tracts of meditation in a single thought. It was not exactly consistent with our own notions of Hamlet, but it was a noble portraiture of a man holding discourse with death; and, to use an expression of Madame de Staël, 'interrogant la pensée sur le sort des mortels'."

Actually this was written in the *London Magazine* in 1822 of the great actor Talma. It perfectly reproduces all that I have ever thought of Irving.

Next in my catalogue of remembered delights is Benson, an admirable Richard II, a superb Henry V, a magnificent Hamlet and Macbeth, a good Lear, and unapproachable in our time as Coriolanus. He had the Roman features, and I can see him now with his hands clenched by his side and the veins in his arms knotted in pride. There is no statue in London to Sir Frank Benson, and there ought not to be, and if ever I am asked for a subscription for this purpose I shall stipulate for a statue *on wheels*, to be kept outside London, hauled about the country, and stand for one month in each year in each of our twelve largest provincial cities. Poetic justice has taken care that only the provincial dramatic critics have been adequate in appreciation of this fine player. With

my exaggerated sense of the mischievous I once looked up what some of the best London critics of the last fifty years have had to say of Sir Frank as actor, and I find little or nothing ! Mr. Shaw is completely mum, and so is William Archer—at least in their republished criticisms. And when a London critic did open his mouth, it was only to put his elegant patent-leather shoe into it ! Mr. Max Beerbohm says of the Benson Company in *Henry V* : “ As a branch of university cricket, the whole performance was, indeed, beyond praise. But as a form of acting, it was not impressive. Not one of the parts was played with any distinction. There was not one that stood out at the time or was remembered later.” Montague, Monkhouse, and I venture to add my own name, were all solid about Benson’s merits as an actor, which the silly stories about athleticism have overlaid. Perhaps the grandest thing about him is the quality of his English ; I have a fancy that the English spoken by Benson is nearer to that which Shakespearean audiences heard than anything to which we listen to-day.

Then that great figure, Mrs. Patrick Campbell. In the early 'nineties Fame was very busy with this lady. Eager and excited playgoers marooned in the provinces were getting ready to welcome the new celebrity over whom the London journals enthused so immoderately. Then suddenly—in October 1893 to be exact—the famous actress burst upon our provincial darkness in *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. This is not the time of day for an exhaustive analysis of an antiquated play, memorable enough in its period, nor yet for a detailed criticism of a piece of acting which has passed into the history of the English stage. I go back to Paula as the first of a long line of parts—Magda, Agnes Ebbsmith, the wife or mistress in *Es Lebe das Leben*—of which the prevailing note was overpowering luxury and magnificence. Now it seemed as though we were at last to have a star of our own, a luminary not too palpably outshone by French and Italian genius. It is true that we still had Ellen Terry, but that dear and great lady was no longer capable of the quality of fresh amazement. There were a few good and one or two great artists in the country, but they were chiefly occupied in

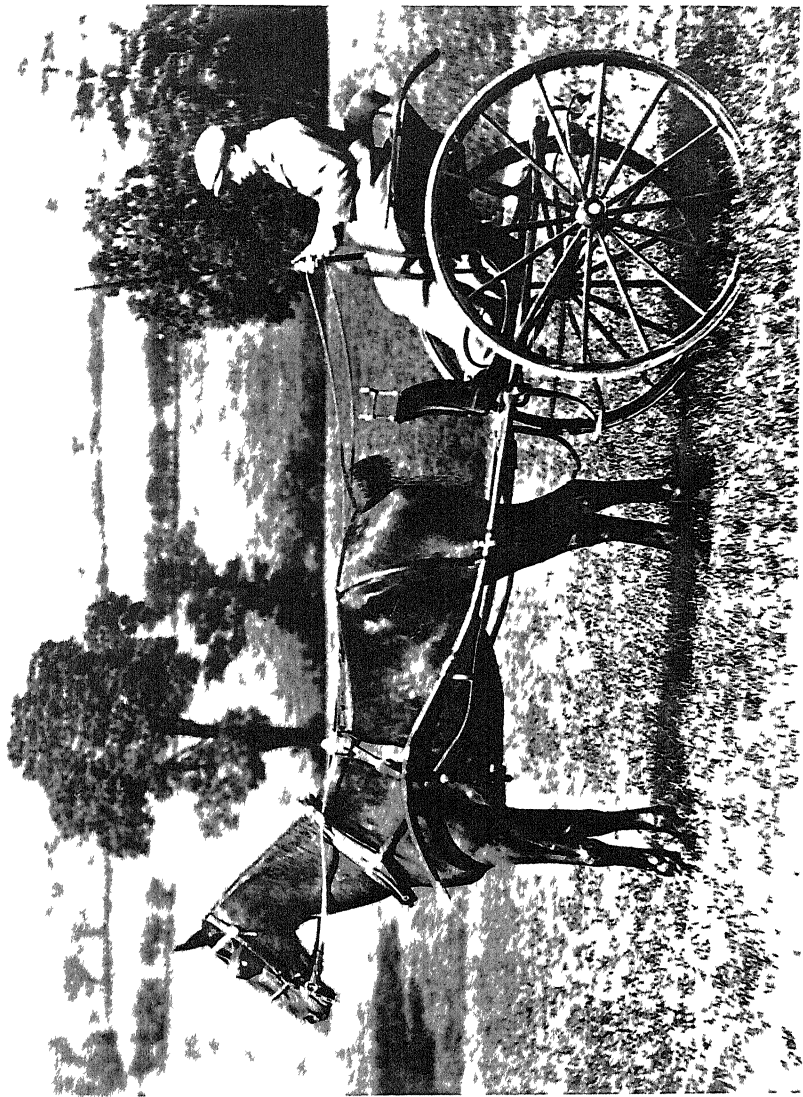
interpreting Ibsen and Mr. Shaw in drill halls at unfashionable hours. Mrs. Campbell, on the other hand, stood for all a poet of the period—who was really no poet at all, but a draughtsman, one Aubrey Beardsley—meant by

réclame and recall,

Paris and St Petersburg, Vienna and St James's Hall

"I love fruit when it's expensive," says Paula in one of her outbursts of frank vulgarity, and the theatre-goer is not yet born who can resist portrayal on the stage of the expensively seamy side of life. Mrs. Campbell's rôles about this time shone with a factitious but very splendid glory. Paula, wearing the sumptuous livery of the *déclassée*, Magda hardly less gorgeously arrayed, even the socialistic Agnes unbarring her shoulders for the delectation of Lucas Cleve, were all more or less "sympathetic" heroines whose troubles did not prevent them from going to good dressmakers. They were exactly the sort of heroine that foreign and cometary genius delights to travel from one end of the habitable globe to the other.

But in and among these sophistications were other portraits of a different order—Mariana, Ophelia, Mélisande. The first was a hyper-civilised and romantic creature of the Spanish dramatist, Echegaray. The play is dim in my memory. All I remember is Mariana's recital of how as a child she was snatched up in her mother's arms to some lover's urgent "Be quick! Be quick!" It was in this scene that Mrs. Campbell first struck for me what was afterwards to be her note, the note of extravagant importunacy, of pleading for more than life can hold, of childish mutiny, of animal distress. All of which would appear to be a matter of intonation of the voice and a way of turning the head to give that wonderful sweep of throat and chin. These are the means; all praise to the artist who can make such sovereign use of them. One of the peculiarities of great actresses is that they will take all possible and impossible, conceivable and inconceivable pains not to appear in great parts. One of the things which could be most legitimately urged against Sarah Bernhardt was that she would never, or hardly ever, play Phèdre, whereas when once she got Sardou's bit in her mouth she would run away with it for months on end and nobody could stop her. In



*Havanotte with Little Joe*





the old days a French playwright who had got hold of a great actress and knew that his talent wasn't up to her weight made no bones about it. He simply arranged for the principal part in the play to be also that of a great actress. Then he would have a Court scene in which a Pope or an Emperor or somebody of the sort would say to the great actress: "I heard you speak a speech once, for the play was not acted more than once; if I remember, it pleased not the million. The speech I loved was Phèdre's confession to Hippolyte. If it live in your memory, begin at this line, 'Ah cruel, though hast understood me too well.'" Whereupon the great actress would reel off ten minutes of her best Racine. I see no reason why the dramatist of to-day should not give a similar opportunity to Mrs. Campbell. Safeguarding the susceptibilities, he might make her play an actress who will not see fifty again. For, after all, dates are dates, and it is forty-one years since the first night of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*.

During these years there were, of course, jaunts to London, where the playgoing was the same as Manchester except that it was a year earlier. One of the earliest productions I saw in London was Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet* at the Lyceum in 1897, the grave grace of which steals over me again as I write. Two years later I fell in love with Nina Boucicault, then playing, and at the age of thirty-two, the title-rôle in a revival of *Sweet Lavender* at Terry's. I was supposed to be hawking calico round the warehouses of St. Paul's Churchyard, in the wake of our principal salesman, Mr. Postlethwaite, but I could hear nothing of the chaffering because of that plaintiveness which I was to see again that night, and again and again. At the end of the week I plucked up courage and wrote for a photograph, saying that the only other piece I had visited more than once was *Lord and Lady Algy*, then playing at the Comedy. In reply I received a photograph and a charming letter from Sweet Lavender saying how rejoiced she was I liked the piece at the Comedy, because her husband, Mr. Kelly, was in it!

I admired Charles Hawtrey as much as I failed to admire Charles Wyndham. The latter was never playing when I was in London, and when he came to us in Manchester he

was old and it was in rubbish like *David Garrick*—to-day I think it is rather a good play, but you know what a boy's judgments are—through which he croaked like a frog in spring. The only other piece in which I ever saw Wyndham was a dreadful thing called *Rosemary*, in which he played an old man of ninety with the hands of a boy of twenty. I never saw him as a young man. Wyndham's later parts, Sir Daniel Carteret in *Mrs. Dane's Defence* and the *raisonneurs* in the drama of Henry Arthur Jones, were always played in the provinces by Henry Neville, and from what I saw of the two actors I very much preferred Neville. I realise, of course, that my views about this great player are as valueless as those of people who, after the war, only saw the wreck of what had been Sarah.

The trips abroad were another story, and for me these meant Paris, where I made the humiliating discovery that my heart's idol was not very much thought of in her own country. Another blow was when, years after, the Café Anglais, the great eating-house of the swells in *The Human Comedy*, was forced to close its doors. The public had begun to want music with its food, an indignity to which this first of the world's restaurants refused to submit. The last time I dined there I noticed the extraordinary precision with which the waiter put down my plate and that of my companion: whatever the size of the dish it exactly fitted between the two plates. I complimented him and he said: "It is, Sir, in this profession as in any other. Either one is an artist or one is not." I remember, too, a supper at the Café de Paris. Sitting opposite me was an exquisite creature with her eyes made up to look like clotted dog-daisies. I had seen nothing like it since, at the age of nine, I first marvelled at the chorus-girls at my first pantomime. She was superb. I noticed that the man with her kept dipping his hand in the champagne bucket and then caressing the woman's shoulder with a proprietorship at which I took magnificent and British umbrage. Presently a stalwart servant appeared, lifted his master in his arms, and carried him to the waiting brougham and pair. The man was a cripple! In some mood of fascination I followed them to the door and saw the servant deposit his master, leaving the lady to get in afterwards. It was raining

cats and dogs, and as my beauty got into the carriage her magnificent cloak fell into the gutter. As the *chasseur* stooped to pick it up she said, "Leave it", and turning to the cripple : "You can buy me another !" The coachman whipped up his horses.

Almost my favourite actress of those days was Réjane, who in some ways was more French than Sarah. Réjane was the actress for showing you life in the raw. There was one play, in the first act of which a French nobleman came to tell her that her husband had misconducted himself with his daughter. I can still see and hear Réjane, with the tears streaming down her face, hurl into the preposterous old bore's teeth : "Monsieur le Duc, you talk as if the seduction of your daughter was a national defeat." The third act showed the wife about to be abandoned by her husband, and the curtain went up on Réjane sitting on the trunk which she had insisted on packing herself. You would have sworn that her nose was red with twenty-four hours' weeping. I had previously seen Réjane in London. A friend of mine, who was the first person to appear on the Manchester Exchange with his trousers pressed, excited further admiration by being the proud owner of one of the earliest motor-cars. In this complicated piece of mechanism we set out from Manchester about four o'clock on the Tuesday afternoon, arriving at Dunchurch, where we slept, at two in the morning. We reached the London theatre where Réjane was playing at a quarter to three the next day. Knowing nothing about parking, which indeed did not exist in those days, we bade an astonished policeman look after the car and dived into the theatre all begrimed, for in those days a pair of motorists were not easily to be distinguished from a driver and his fireman.

I also saw Réjane in *La Montansier*, a dreadful piece in which on the night I went she was giving a shocking performance. I attributed this to the fact that the house was almost empty, and I sent round a note to say that in the first row of stalls was a young Englishman who all his life had maintained against all comers that she was the greatest living actress. I did not know the French for letting one down, but managed to convey that if she didn't buck up for the

remainder of the performance that championship would cease. As it happened, the actress had a very long tirade to deliver in the next act, and it was delivered as I should think tirade has never been delivered before or since. And after the performance she gave me a little special bow all to myself.

I reminded Réjane of this when, during the war, I met her at Arles. She was on tour in *Madame Sans-Gêne*, and staying at the same hotel which housed the British Army, meaning me. On behalf of that army I sent round to the theatre a sheaf of flowers large enough to cover a billiard table and costing fourteen francs, and a note saying that this was the second time in my life I had written to her. I forget now whether I told her about the first letter then and there, or waited till that little supper at which she graciously promised to be present. There was nobody else except the two of us. We ate a dreadful meal and drank some abominable wine, and this great player, who on the stage had more *chic* than any woman I have ever seen, turned into a plain, sensible, little body with the manners and appearance of a good-class housekeeper. When she died I found that my impression of her in private life was confirmed by everybody who had known her.

One of my lasting regrets is that in my time she did not act in *Germinie Lacerteux*, a piece made out of Goncourt's tragic novel. I never saw Réjane in anything better than Brieux's *La Robe Rouge*, but I had an extravagant admiration for her. Arthur Symonds, writing of the difference between the two actresses, says that while it is Sarah who prepares the supreme feast, Réjane skins emotions alive. That I think is true, and it follows that of the two one could see Réjane the oftener, since there was nothing about her that could cloy.

I suppose it was about this time that I joined the "Society of the Friends of Balzac", of which I was the only English member. I know I paid the first subscription, but am doubtful about the second. Probably I gave it up at the time when, in order to buy my first pony, I sold the complete luxury edition of the works of Henry James, to which the publishers told me many years afterwards I had been the only Manchester subscriber.

## CHAPTER V

### ASSAULT ON LONDON

THE war years are a separate book, of which in *L. of C.* (Lines of Communication) and as far as they affected me I have written. My war career was neither glorious nor inglorious; it was just nothing. I joined up in the Army Service Corps on a May morning in 1915 through hearing the band of the Irish Guards playing in Trafalgar Square, and I joined that corps because at thirty-eight I did not feel myself to be a first-class military proposition. My name is on the Chapel-en-le-Frith War Memorial—Derbyshire folk do not “see” being robbed of patriotic merit because they do not happen to have been killed. They got the year wrong, but the intention was good. In the training camps I had six months of that camaraderie which makes the sentimental find something good in war. Apart from my lieutenant’s pay I was without a bean. The articles of my partnership permitted all the partners to draw in anticipation of their earnings. Up till the 4th of August, 1914, I had drawn on account of profits for that year something like £4,000, which was awkward in view of the fact that my actual share turned out to be something under £90. But I am not writing a Balzac novel, and the outcome of quite remarkable financial hopes which flattered to deceive shall not be further examined here. Sufficient to say that the change from keeping a stud of show horses to cutting a very small figure at Buller Barracks, Aldershot, was considerable, and that I enjoyed it very much. At Havre I asked to be sent to the front, because I had the firm conviction that the A.S.C. front was not very near and I wanted to see enough of the war to write a book about it. The result of the request was that the following evening I was sent down to Provence, where until Armistice Day I was occupied in baling and despatching hay to the army in Salonika. Now one bale

of hay is very much like another, and I have since computed that the number of trucks I loaded and despatched during those four years would, if placed end to end, reach from London to Manchester and back again to Rugby. Every day I rode over a hundred kilometres in an army motor-car, and my taste for motoring, except as a means of getting about, may be judged from the fact that never once did I take the wheel. I have never learned to drive anything except a horse.

Throughout the war I held the record of being the British officer farthest from gunfire ! The odd thing is that during this business of hay purchase I developed a financial genius. My system of accounting for hay purchases in a foreign land in war-time was officially adopted by the War Office and a hand-book made on the subject, the intricacies of which a giddy second-lieutenant was sent all the way from Rouen to expound to me who invented them. I told him I had written the damned thing and he said, " Good ! I've got to put in a fortnight here, anyhow. What about some fishing ? "

How it all came about was like this. My best friends in Manchester were a firm called Dehn & Company. They were of German origin, and there is a delicious story about old Gustav Dehn, who was naturalised, saying good-bye to a son who was joining up. " I give you, Harold," he said, with the tears streaming down his face, " to your country, which is England. But one thing I forbid you. When you get to Hamburg I forbid you to kill your aunts." A merchant called Kolp having changed his name to Knight, Gustav Dehn said on one occasion " Good-night, Mr. Kolp or good-kolp, Mr. Knight—I can never remember which ! " The old gentleman had all the best German qualities, including intense loyalty, warm-heartedness and generosity of mind, allied to an ever-bubbling spring of Jewish wit. His brother Rudolf was an impassioned admirer of Sarah Bernhardt, and only the other day I was privileged to see a letter in which Sarah thanked him for " *cette jolie promenade* ". Rudolf appears to have driven her to Buxton in a four-wheeled cab ! All the time I was in Manchester the house of Dehn was my second home. Gustav's eldest son Fritz has been my best friend for

years, and it is right and proper that Fritz's eldest son Paul should be my godson.

In what way is all this concerned with hay purchase in the Bouches-du-Rhône? I remembered Dehn & Company's method of being able to tell at 3 p.m. on the 5th November how their turnover corresponded with what they had done in 1866 and hoped to do in 1966 at that date and hour. I kept my hay statistics in exactly the same way, and when the D. of S. asked for a report as to the comparative cost of French civilian carting and A.S.C. motor-transport I was able to supply it with actual statistics drawn from seventy farms, per mile per ton, or more accurately per hundred kilos per kilometre over varying distances. I could prove that the motor-transport was cheaper over the shorter distances of two to three kilometres, because for civilian horse-transport there was a minimum distance of five kilometres, and two kilometres count as five. But since the higher command had always held contrary views, my statement could not be accepted. A reversal of opinion was demanded, but I just stowed them under with statistics and vouchers and receipts and sub-vouchers and calculations to six places of decimals.

The thing on which I most prided myself was something that I called the Profit and Loss Account. When you get British Tommies checking goods delivered to Spanish balers by French farm-hands, and coming from farms all with similar names, none of which either the Spanish or the British can pronounce, you are bound to get into a terrible muddle. Thus you will appear to have received ten thousand bales from the Mas de l'Étang, which has only contracted to supply a thousand, while the Mas de l'Été, from which you bought ten thousand, will be credited with a bare thousand. The same with the Mas de Berre and the Mas Thibert. We would be pressing at forty farms at once, which meant forty discrepancies and nobody's account would be straight. After months of argument I persuaded the War Office to the view that the discrepancies did not matter because they were apparent and not real, that if the farmers were satisfied that they had been paid for the amount they delivered, and if our surpluses always balanced our deficiencies, there was nothing more to be said



by anybody. I, who am supposed to know nothing about arithmetic, let alone book-keeping, was responsible for spending over four hundred thousand francs a month in the Bouches-du-Rhône, and at any time up to the end of my three years the accounts were right to a centime. In the South of France, more modestly let me say round about Arles, Salon, Raphaël and Miramas, keen buying, cheese-paring economy and meticulous book-keeping are bound up with the name of le Capitaine Agathe—as they insisted on spelling my name.

I have forgotten everything that happened during those four years except my marriage, of which it would not be proper to omit all mention. This happened in 1917, when I married an exquisite little lady whose family were rich land-owners in the Bouches-du-Rhône. But after the war it was inhuman to expect a Provençal to endure the English fogs and, obviously, I could not accept a life of idleness under that monotonous, infernal sun. For all the wealth in the Indies I would not be exiled in them! We should have foreseen this and didn't. In the end we separated, and there can never have been a friendlier divorce. There are some things the French manage better, and this is one of them. My former wife has since re-married, and the legend in the country-side is that her first husband, the English captain, turned out to have a sufficiency of wives at home. "A ce qu'il paraît, c'était un bigamiste féroce." Of the rest of my sex-life there will be no account in this book. This is unfashionable, but I cannot help it. Every autobiography that I read to-day tells me at what age its author first practised masturbation, what at school he learned from his mates, and what in later life he taught his mistresses. I appreciate that in the case of world-figures like Cellini, Rousseau, Wagner, Pepys, these details may have interest. But I am not of this size, and have enough of Victorian fastidiousness to believe that unless a man is of such stature his sex-experiences should be kept to himself.

After the war I found myself more or less stranded. The partnership in the cotton business had come to an end and I had only my gratuity. About this time, however, the mill whose goods had largely passed through my hands was sold in the great cotton boom for three hundred thousand pounds,

an enormous enhancement of what had normally been thought to be its value. I think I have to say here that, though I spent over my horses and in writing dramatic criticism many hours which should have been devoted to the sale of calico, when I did push I pushed well. Oddly enough buyers liked a salesman who did not seem to care whether he effected sales or not. In the upshot Arthur Brook Aspland, the mill's managing director, with extraordinary generosity and out of his own pocket, gave me two thousand pounds. He had known me since I was ten, which to the normal, hard-headed Lancashire man of business is no reason at all for Quixotism.

With this sum I bought a small general stores in the South Lambeth Road behind whose counter I proposed to stand and dispense confectionery, stationery, and tobacco. Actually I did nothing of the kind, preferring to retire to the flat above, where I wrote a book of essays. While I was making fifty pounds out of that book, I was losing more than the thousand pounds I had put into the shop below, the full story of which I afterwards told in *Blessed are the Rich*. This was my first serious financial crisis. I do not know that the misadventure caused me to lose any of my faith in human nature, but it taught me two very valuable things. The first is that if you run out of, say, the *Daily Sketch* it is useless to offer a customer a copy of, say, the *Daily Telegraph* or even to give him one free. He wants the paper to which he is accustomed. I am persuaded that this holds true throughout the world's commerce. The second thing I learned was that a side of bacon has two unsaleable hocks and that in the hot weather these two hocks become four : in heat-waves the progression is geometrical. I do not altogether put down my defection from the business of salesmanship as being part and parcel of my many defections. I could sell calico when I wanted to ; I could not sell cigarettes because I could never remember where among all the varieties that one which the customer wanted was kept, and presently the customer got bored with having to point it out. I have always hated inefficiency more than anything else in the world, and that was why I tired of the Alarums and Excursions in the shop and retired upstairs to write a book with that title.

Recently I have found consolation in the reflection that when, finally, one comes to selling matches in the gutter, they will be all of one kind and the tray will be small. Meanwhile I was forced to sell the horses for the second time, all my money had gone, and down Vauxhall way all was blue.

The post of dramatic critic to the *Saturday Review* becoming vacant, I applied for it, Tom Young, Assistant Public Trustee, and a former member of the *Guardian* staff, having mentioned me to his brother Filson, the editor. I interviewed Filson, and this conversation ensued :

F. Y. Yes, Tom has told me about your work on the "M.G." Will you do me a sample article?

J. A. No, by gad!

F. Y. Why not?

J. A. Because out of sheer nerves I should put into it every damned silly thing of which I'm capable.

F. Y. What do you suggest, then?

J. A. I will become your dramatic critic now, and you can sack me the moment I am not the best dramatic critic in England bar Montague.

F. Y. Right. Let me have your first article the day after to-morrow.

He had it next day and said, "That's the stuff!" The article appeared September 24th, 1921. I think I ought to say that at this date Ivor Brown and Charles Morgan had not risen above my horizon.

Filson was not altogether easy; you never knew whether he was going to receive you with more charm and fascination than any other human being has ever possessed, or was in the mood represented by the following true story. One day when I called, the office boy said the Editor was too busy to see me. I insisted, and the boy clinched the matter: "Cutting yer froat may get yer into the presence o' Gawd a'mighty. But it won't get yer ter see ahr Editor." I hope nobody will think I do not like Filson. I like him very much, and I sometimes think he likes me. But we are both conscious that we are acquired tastes, and that a little of us at a time is

as much as anybody can be expected to stand. Filson is a first-class writer and journalist, and I learned a lot from him. To this day I follow his advice, which was that when I had finished an article I should go back to the beginning, cut out the first paragraph, and start with the second.

At last I had found my real job in life. That the shoemaker should stick to his last is an important rule. But an even more important one is that the shoemaker should discover the right last early on in life. With the exception of the 'prentice work on the *Manchester Guardian* I regard everything I did up to the day I joined the *Saturday Review* as so much wasted time. When my first article appeared I was forty-four years of age. Allowing four years for the war and eighteen for getting born and educated, this means that half my life had been utterly thrown away.

The next big thing that happened to me was in June, 1923, when I received a letter from Leonard Rees, editor of the *Sunday Times*, asking me to call. This is the most important letter I ever received in my life, for as a result of it I entered into what I must call my life-work. I am conscious of no absurdity in saying this ; the point is not the size of the work but how much a man puts into it. If a man is no more than an inventor of mouse-traps and gives a hundred per cent of himself to inventing them he is doing his life's work, and a Napoleon cannot do more. When I told Filson Young that I was leaving the *Saturday Review* and joining the *Sunday Times* he said, " These Sunday papers will cut your stuff to hell ! The only thing to do is to send them yards and yards of it and not care a damn what happens."

Never did anybody utter a truer prophecy. For a time all went well, and indeed for three or four years I got on capitally with Rees. He was approaching seventy then and it is important to remember two things about him. First, he had been twenty years making the *Sunday Times*, and he had made it, coming to complete success very late in life. Second, he had an inferiority complex, the result of knowing that he was not the intellectual equal of members of his staff like Gosse and Newman. He was very short, so that I, who am not tall, towered over him. Now it is extremely difficult to dominate

people to whom you have to look up. (In my conversations with Sir John Reith at the B.B.C. I invariably try to manœuvre so that he shall sit while I stand, the result of which has generally been that I have found myself in the lowest of low armchairs with a crick in my neck.) This explains why all small men have a tendency to take after the bantam—strut and become dictatorial. I am a little given that way myself and when two bantam cocks meet the feathers have to fly. I am perfectly certain that Rees was well disposed towards me, and after all it was to him that I owed my position. He had eyes for other men's work and chose mine.

We played golf together, at which game I would give him two strokes a hole or eighteen bisques. He was tremendously keen and I always paid him the compliment of winning if I could. Once I thought he was going to win, for he stood on the last tee at Dulwich with five bisques in hand. The hole is a spoon shot and, as I could play a bit in those days, my ball stopped about three yards from the pin. Rees, when he arrived on the green, had played seven and he proceeded to take at least four putts. I remember an amusing thing that happened at the sixth or seventh tee that day. It was a Monday and on the previous day my stuff had appeared with the words "light woman" altered to "a woman unstable by nature". Having missed his tee shot for the sixth or seventh time, Rees turned to me and said, "I wish you would tell me what's the matter with my driving." I said, "I'm afraid, Sir, it's unstable by nature." He put his eyeglass in his eye, looked me steadily in the face, and said, "I thought you were very good yesterday."

And then a certain cacoëthes overtook the old gentleman—the itch for whatever is the Latin for cutting. Now I have never minded my stuff being cut, provided I am allowed to do it myself or it is done intelligently. For five years I gave up every Saturday morning, which meant sacrificing golf and week-ends, to attending at St. Clement's Press to cut my stuff to the required length. This done and the article finally approved, I would leave about four o'clock and then hang about till the first edition of the paper came out, when I would find an almost unrecognisable residuum. Again, I

did not mind that, provided that whoever did the cutting had arranged for the residuum to make sense. Now Rees's habit was to cut as he read, and leave in the untouched part references to things which he had deleted. For example, he would cross out a reference to Henry Irving and in the next paragraph leave some such sentence as : " This was never the old man's way." The reader who thinks that I am making a great deal of fuss about nothing has never put his heart and soul into any work and then seen it destroyed. I tried protests, first the plaintive sort and then the angry. I consulted lawyers. I wrote paragraphs beginning, " Notwithstanding the foregoing", to ensure that the foregoing was kept in, and worried lest one Sunday morning I should wake up to find a whole article beginning that way ! I used to sit late into the night arranging my stuff so that if all the odd sentences were deleted it would still make sense. Then I would try with all the even sentences deleted. But nothing availed or could avail with Rees who, one day, in reply to my protest that he could not cut an article, said, " Damn it, man, I could cut the Lord's Prayer ! " Had there been any other available platform I should, while the old man was editor, have resigned a score of times. But one does not give up one's life-work so easily and it is not in my nature to bluff. Instead, in 1928, I had a nervous breakdown. I still have on my desk the wicker tray marked " Rows with Rees ". For years this was never empty.

In the middle of these blazing excitements the old man would send me a letter like the following :

31 *Bullingham Mansions,*  
*Kensington, W.*  
 4 : xi : 1928.

MY DEAR AGATE,

A line to congratulate you on to-day's article, which I think tip-top—thoughtful, sound, sympathetic, and with style. I couldn't have cut a word, and you finish with your flavour unexhausted.

Yours sincerely,

LEONARD REES.

On one occasion he sent for me and presented me with his entire theatrical library. I was intensely sorry when the old man died, for in a way I was fond of him. I had always hoped that for my sake he would retire, and for his own spend another twenty-five years sunning himself on the front at Brighton.

In 1926 my great friend, George Herbert Mair, died. On the hundredth anniversary of the death of Coleridge a writer in *The Times* said :

Legends, particularly baleful ones, die hard. There are three or more in Coleridge's story : one relates to opium, one to indolence, another to irresponsibility in daily duties. . . . What psychological flaw there was in his spirit we can only guess at ; it may not have arisen from physical sickness ; but it was there. . . . Saying he would do a thing became the same thing as doing it. And in a way he was right. When Coleridge thought, the deed was complete, the thought was the act, only the work of transcription was lacking. . . . Insistence is made upon harsher things ; but an abiding gentleness and simplicity and the baffling awareness that he would never again in full measure find within him the symphony and song ; these are the clues to his character. . . .

Every word of this might have been written about Mair, whose gentleness and simplicity abide for ever with those who were and are his friends. "Saying he would do a thing became the same thing as doing it." There was the rub, which Mair carried to the extent of saying he had done a thing when in fact he had only thought about doing it. When he swore that he had posted a letter you knew he meant to go home and write it. Knowing you were hard up he would say : "I'm getting three hundred from the paper to-morrow and I'll send you a hundred. How will you have it ?" What that meant was that if his proprietor or anybody else had been making Mair a present his first thought would have been to share it with you. He seldom kept an appointment and in the later years you came not to expect it. I possess only one note from him, written on the morning of the production of *Blessed are the Rich* and received about midnight. There is just a flash of

my old friend in it: for once in a while the dear fellow explains his defection. Unique concession, rare soul!

31 *Queen's Gate.*  
*Day of Production.*

MY DEAR JIMMIE,

I'm really dreadfully disappointed not to have been to the first night, but whenever I can get out for the evening I'll come. Also I'd have loved to come to the party only at that time I shall be in the arms of Morphia (a good O. Henry touch!).

You know you've got the warmest wishes for your success and to be as rich as you are blessed. Remember Shaw's first night which is the last case of the same kind of importance, and don't forget to wear doeskin gloves.

With all best wishes for a long run and a fine reception,  
Yours aff'ly,

G. H. M.

I first knew George when he joined the staff of the *Manchester Guardian*. I was told that he had had a brilliant career at Oxford and was to help in the dramatic criticism. Any natural feeling of jealousy disappeared the moment I set eyes on him. Of all the men I have ever known Mair was the most intensely lovable. He had the gift of comradeship to an extraordinary degree and I am glad to think that one of my books bears the dedication:

To  
G. H. MAIR  
FOR HIS GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP.

Of all the journalists I have known Mair was the most naturally gifted and had more than any other the genius for assimilation. When it was a question of a great foreign singer, then G. H., as all his friends called him, would know more about *bel canto* than all the professors at all the conservatoires. When flying was first mooted G. H. knew when the Channel would be first flown, and when it was flown knew better than Blériot how it had been done. If it had been possible to invent a new subject—and flying was new—G. H. would have known the approach to it. He was the only man I would have put in



single and supreme control of broadcasting. His memory was colossal. He once went into the country for a holiday and came back in six weeks with a *History of English Literature for Schools* from the Venerable Bede down to the less venerable Joyce; he had looked up no books of reference and in the entire volume only six dates were wrong. He smiled his way through life, had over-plus of good nature and tolerated fools too gladly. It was at Chapel-en-le-Frith that George, who was speaking at a Liberal meeting, gave a magnificent answer to a heckler. The time was when the *Daily Mail* was conducting a campaign on behalf of eight new battleships—"We Want Eight and We Won't Wait." My friend was in the middle of demolishing the *Mail's* argument when a man at the back of the hall shouted out: "What right have you to talk on navy matters?" G. H. answered: "Only that my great-grandfather was assistant-surgeon on board the *Victory* at the Battle of Trafalgar!" It was in my rooms at Chapel that G. H. became engaged to be married to Maire O'Neill, the actress; it was with G. H. that I spent the evening of August the 4th, 1914; and it was with G. H. that I went for the first time to *The Bing Boys*. I can still hear his fat, slow chuckle, so little gross, so full of zest for common, homely things. He had a gay and exquisite mind, and though something of a broken reed himself his sympathy was an endless source of strength to those who made calls upon it. It was natural that the cream of the world's achievements in fact or fiction should happen to G. H. Much did he travel in the realms of gold. Thus it was only right that it should be to him that a great Irish poet said of Martin Harvey's *Hamlet* during a performance at the Theatre Royal, Manchester: "He plays it like a rabbit with a thunderbolt tied to its tail!"

When Mair died in 1926 Herbert Sidebotham wrote a noble piece about him in the *Daily Graphic*. I asked Sidebotham if I might quote this, and he not only said Yes but took the trouble to unearth and type it. Here it is:

Journalists commonly do less than justice to each other's work and memories in their papers just as they do more than justice to politicians and actors, and I have therefore a

public as well as a private reason for giving my column to-day to the memory of George Herbert Mair. Mair has just died at the age of thirty-nine, a short life measured in years but long in experience and in output of energy.

When I first knew Mair, he was a tall slim young man of twenty-five, fresh from Aberdeen and from Christ Church, Oxford. He already knew more of men and affairs than most people of forty, but in his zest for life and new experience he was still a boy. Apart from games which he hated, nothing in life came amiss to him. He had the quickest mind of any one I have ever met, and understood what you were going to say almost before you had begun to say it.

He had immense industry and forgot nothing ; an insatiable curiosity about whatever was new, whether it was scholarship, literature or affairs, and sufficient philosophy to be tidy and orderly in his mind ; he had the tongue of a cynic but a disposition that was amiable to weakness, especially where his friends were concerned ; a fluent and ready vocabulary, whether speaking or writing, but defective in the one respect that it did not contain a single No. In his relaxation he took more out of himself than most people when they are working ; he knew no repose but flung himself from violent mental work into equally violent strain of another kind ; he seemed at times anxious to wring every experience and interest in life dry. Yet he never did. To the end he was always keen, never bored with anything and his zest in life retained its sharp edge. But the mind shook the body to pieces like a too high-mettled horse running away with the frail carriage and kicking it to pieces. And so he died before his time. Poor Mair !

Mair never refused any one anything. Even if you asked him to lunch he would accept and not turn up rather than say No. And there was often more than a suspicion of moral cowardice about him. But physically he was a brave man and of the type that is capable of heroic deeds of daring. One of the famous things Mair did. He was, during the peace negotiations after the war, the official responsible (with Lord Riddell) for giving out information to the newspapers. His last duty at Versailles was to prepare a summary of the Peace Treaty for publication in the newspapers.

The work of course had to be done in a hurry, for politicians—like nearly every one without experience—think that writ-

ing for the newspapers is done as quickly as the rotary presses can print it. Mair accomplished the task in a single continuous sitting of thirty-six hours—a feat to which one cannot recall a parallel and which alone should earn a lasting fame for him.

Except sub-editing a newspaper (a highly specialised and technical job for which Mair in his ignorance asked when he first made application for newspaper work) Mair did everything that journalists have done and a great deal that few journalists would dare to do.

He was especially in his younger days the liveliest of companions, versatile in his interests, volatile in his wit, and probably the best gossip of our time. He took as much trouble to talk well as he did to write; he paid every one the compliment of trying to understand and please him. He was so quick and intuitive in his sympathies that many who did not know him well doubted whether he could be sincere. But he was. He had a very tender and soft heart and went to endless trouble to help people in difficulties. He believed in his friends and loved to give with both hands.

Lovable in his errors and weak even in his power, Mair gave more than he ever received. No more agony of pen-racing against the clock; no more hurrys and scurrys to and fro; no more changes and vicissitudes of fortune and of masters; no more revolt against a world too fascinating and too cruel— O restless man, rest at last!

This same year was largely a period of stress, during which I went to ground in Doughty Street, blinds lowered, answering neither door nor telephone, and appointing Freddy Webster as Master of the Draw-bridge and Keeper of the Portcullis. Freddy was my servant, ally, body-guard and faithful friend all the time I lived in Doughty Street. Spare and very strong, with a punch in either hand that could go through a barrack-room door, he was an ex-Coldstream Guard who had been at Mons, where he always declared he got trench fever. I once asked him if he would like to join up again, and he said “only if there was a war on”. He had no nerves, was an authority on church architecture, and the most efficient of bastions and curtains. A man after my Uncle Toby’s heart.

For four years he was my defence against duns, and we should never have parted company but for the fact that at Christmas he liked a week of what he called "stand-off", in the course of which he might absent-mindedly have strangled anybody. I shall always have a soft spot for Freddy who, the last time I heard of him, was chucker-out at a roughish picture-palace Lambeth way.

One morning in the early autumn of 1926 Webster put his head round my bedroom door and announced a young man to see me. I said, "Tell him to go away." Freddy came back and said the young man had gone, leaving a book which he begged I would read. I grunted and went to sleep again. Next morning at the same hour the young man called again and Fred, who has an eye for character as well as for architecture, said he thought I had better see him. Grunting something about coming back in three weeks' time, I again went to sleep. During the course of those three weeks I glanced at the book which the young man had left behind. It had been hand-written, and an accompanying note said :

Alan H. Dent

aspires to be a dramatic critic, hopes you will look at this his book, and will call again at 11 a.m. to-morrow morning. I should add perhaps that I have run away from home—Scotland.

Not encouraged by this ungrammatical beginning, I began to turn over the pages and was astonished to find that the stuff in them, though alternatively naïve and over-written, was at least as good as anything appearing in the weekly reviews. I had not dipped into many of the articles before I perceived that whoever wrote them had that very rare thing, the critical mind. The young man—Fred said he could not be more than twenty—would begin a notice of a concert with the remark that "the programme was top-heavy". His sensitiveness to Aldous Huxley's writing did not prevent him from saying that the one-act play in *Limbo* was "unpardonably silly". Of some highbrow stage-designer he wrote that "he failed to make a preposterous scene in the next world resemble anything more metaphysical than a urinal"

Even when his writing did not come off there was something in it. About some Sibelius :

. . . I feel that this great music soars above the aspiring programme. Not only have we frozen heights, the glitter, glitter, the keen ringing loneliness of icebergs, the windy silences, the snow, but the mind is sent into the immensities—to stars, to the dark thoughts of great whales, to the mystery of joy, to the dreamy gloom of death.

Whales or no whales, I should at any time be glad to meet to-day the odd fish who at this boy's age could write as my unknown visitor had written of Giorgione's "Adulteress Brought Before Christ". And I will confess that I was not ungratified to see a notice of a book of mine.

But the author did not spend much time upon me, preferring to turn his thoughts in the direction of Marie Lloyd :

. . . On the first occasion I saw this artist I was a mere infant and I only remember the dashing swing of the song she sang—"Rum-tiddly-um-tum-tay." The second and last time I must have been nine or so. Marie wore a low-cut dress of green silky stuff, a necklace which she twirled with her thumb, prominent breasts, and a full glittering liquid smile.

Anybody who could remember Marie's trick with her thumb and think it worth reproducing after a dozen years must have the critical mind. This and the Rabelaisian phrase about the stage-designer did the trick. When, prompt to his time, the young man turned up again there was no need of Freddy's, "You've got to see 'im."

He announced that his name was Alan Dent, that he resided at some absurd place near Ayr, that he had received a university education, hated medicine and refused to be a doctor, that he admired my work, intended to be my secretary willy-nilly, and had walked from Scotland for that purpose. I looked at his boots and knew the last statement to be merely *ad captandum* and with intent to mollify. I asked how he had spent the three weeks. "Tramping to Dorchester." "Why?" "To see the Hardy country." "Where did you sleep?" "Under the hedges" (it had been fine). "How eat?"

"Beg." In the end I believed one-third of the young man's story and sent him away with the order to produce an account of his three weeks' tramp, not more than five thousand words. I gave him two pounds, never expecting to see them or him again. But Freddy wholly believed in him, and four days later he turned up with fifteen thousand words, which I forced him to boil down to some four thousand. This he ungraciously did, and I sent the stuff in to the *Saturday Review*, then edited by Gerald Barry. Gerald, who is a first-class judge of the right stuff, accepted the article and this appeared on the following Friday. It was amateurish and of course over-written, but not as badly as I over-wrote at double the age. Anyhow it was first-class in conception and outline. So Miss Somebody-or-Other had to go—actually I had been getting ready for her departure for some time—and Alan Dent was installed as secretary. Freddy broke the news by saying, "Jock, you're engaged!" From that day onwards he has been known to the world as "Jock". He is taller than he looks, has a ridiculously large head and a fearsome mane, extremely gentle manners which make a bear-pit of the Savoy grill, for example. Has a studied little bow which confers dignity upon the recipient, and talks to you picking his words like somebody choosing presents for a King. Visits houses where I am not admitted, is *persona gratissima* with all the high-brows, and I am prepared to believe that there is a Raeburn in his bedroom at home.

I asked him what his father was, and he said simply, "A poet—and a tobacconist." Not being a kidnapper I wired for his father to come to see me. He arrived and said simply and without affectation: "You'll have guessed that my son inherits his genius from me!" They are not really Scotch, but Westmorland folk who have moved to Scotland. The father approved of me, or wouldn't formulate disapproval, and departed for Euston with a natural dignity. What more is there to be said? In addition Jock is mad, *très paysan*, and with the tact of genius dresses like a peasant. Yes, genius is the word. He will always let me down in an emergency. For example, he will go into Surrey to moon and maunder, leaving a note to say that *all* my editors have rung up and it's

important ! On the other hand he will perform prodigies of devotion, such as reading the entire works of Landor to verify a quotation. He knows he is too valuable to be easily sacked, and has the knack of producing from some queer pocket the works of Clare or Praed just at the moment I want them. He trades on his indispensability, or is inclined to, and is penitent about it afterwards, when he thinks he looks rueful and I think he looks funny. In two words, Hardy's Jude plagued by nightingales instead of Arabellas.

But the best account of Jock is to be found in *Gemel in London*, in which he is the Gemel to my Rubicon. The idea was that I should contribute the plot and the characters, and that he would go away to Scotland and rough it all in, and come back in the necessary weeks or months with some ninety thousand words, on which we could work together. I find this letter, written in London and dated early September, 1927 :

55 *Doughty Street.*

5 *p.m.*

My brain flutters endlessly over the blank pages of the new novel. Let me go and write it immediately—as soon as we have come to the vaguest decision as to plot, I mean as soon as we agree that it is not to be about Madagascar, Mediævalism, or Muffin Manufacture. I warn you that there is going to be a great deal of *unwitty* but always significant detail. Readers are to be informed *what* Lady Shackle is wearing, and *where* Lady Thong may be sitting, and *how* Miss Bound is dispensing the tea. It is essential that we have that sort of meandering, and that nothing should be left to the understanding of those who don't possess any !

I was, I think naturally, cross at your not taking me to lunch on this first day of the New Project, at your abominable conduct of yesterday, at the general and mysterious and perhaps imaginary ostracism I seem to be undergoing, and at this mean, Rubiconal emphasis on the enormous gratitude I ought to bear you. Then I recollected and found great comfort in this :—

“ TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,—Like all other men who have great friends, you begin to feel the pangs of neglected merit ; and all the

comfort that I can give you is, by telling you that you have probably more pangs to feel and more neglect to suffer. You have, indeed, begun to complain too soon ; and I hope I am the only confidant of your discontent. . . . If a vacancy happens in Scotland, give them early intelligence.

Of the exaltations and depressions of your mind you delight to talk, and I hate to hear. Drive all such fancies from you.

The present dreadful confusion of the publick ought to make you wrap yourself up in your hereditary possessions, which, though less than you may wish, are more than you can want ; and in an hour of religious retirement return thanks to god, who has exempted you from any strong temptation to faction, treachery, plunder, and disloyalty . . .

London, Dec. 24, 1783.

SAM. JOHNSON."

Don't tell me that that isn't *à propos* !

*A vous,*

JOCK DENT.

7 p.m.

You have just laid bare and waste nearly half of my letter by ringing up to ask me to go to the theatre with you !

*A toi,*

J. D.

A fortnight later Jock was writing to me from Scotland :

*Spooncreel,*

*Maybole.*

15th Sept., 1927.

Thank you, thank you for the papers and the welcome letter. Only, remember that my name is spelled ALAN.

Meantime, you are in the position of the economical bourgeois in Labiche who expected sumptuousness to appear on his table though he gave no fuel to his cook. My cold collations may not be to your taste ; am I to be blamed ?

I shall return precisely when you *ask* me to, *providing* you send me enough to make the journey *comfortably*.

I am living in a stone cottage with walls more than a yard thick and a single room. There seems nothing abroad but curlews and rain. I am entirely alone and am credited with monomania. Once in two days a distraught relative appears with basket and bottle to feed me. Even in circumstances so amenable I find that I can produce only two



thousand words a day. At this rate the last chapter will be written on the 5th of October exactly—the date when the thing is due.

This book may not please you. But it has some of me in it and a good deal of you. Indeed I venture to protest that parts of it are worthy.

My *method* I find to be the reverse of yours. My brain must resemble Beethoven's note-books in its copiousness of emendations: the sheet I write is clear and sans erasure. Honestly, I spent last Thursday morning over eight words and did not write one of them till noon; they were then, however, perfect.

It is difficult now for either of us to tell which part is Jock's and which mine. He came back from Scotland with forty thousand words, which between us we expanded into eighty thousand. The characters of Gemel and Rubicon were invented by me and I am responsible for the situation in Chapter XXXIII, and for Lintie sleeping innocently in the bed on which, twenty-four hours earlier, Gemel had lost his innocence. Most of the revision was mine, this taking the form of leaving Jock's best things scrupulously alone. Jock invented Lintie and Linda—though I gave him the wicker frames for them—also Todd, Toddy, Mrs. Knight, Ivy, Nurney and Chibbing. Nobody invented Prosper Lavelle; we just took him. The whole of the short Chapter XXVI is Jock's. The notion of using the theme from Berlioz's *Carnaval Romain* was mine. As I was under contract to do a novel under my own name I could not very well add Jock's. But I inserted this dedication:

To  
ALAN DENT  
THE ONLIE BEGETTER  
OF  
AND COLLABORATOR  
IN  
MUCH THAT ENSUES

It looked rather like a tombstone, and the book's reception was the grave of my hopes as a novelist.

In November, 1926, in the King's Bench Division, before Mr. Justice Avory and a Special Jury, I sued the Guardian





Concerto  
Gamb. Violoncello & Organo

PRESTO

cres- cen-

Published to  
 Her most Gracious Majesty the Queen  
 His most Gracious Majesty, Prince of Wales  
 & to His Imperial Majesty Napoleon III

Publishers  
 Boosey and Co  
 London



Publications Ltd. for libel. The words complained of were these :

Mr. Agate is a sad contrast to our other authors. . . . He has high spirits, and really he has little else except a fine recollection of his rather ordinary boyhood. He has neither taste nor style ; he labels one essay " Heresies ", but we can assure him that his cheap witticisms at Titian and Velasquez no more deserve the name than would the vulgar gestures of an uneducated urchin who misbehaves in church. There is nothing heretical in bad manners. Mr. Agate's chief interest is in the theatre ; and the fact that he is now regarded as one of our leading dramatic critics illustrates how pitifully that important branch of criticism has deteriorated, and explains a great deal that is wrong with the modern stage.

I was awarded a farthing damages, had to pay my own costs, and left the court reflecting on the strange wisdom of Beerbohm Tree's maxim, " Never show your humour to the humourless, or they will use it in evidence against you." The result was a serious blow, and brought about my second serious financial crisis. Kind people came forward and lent me money, but not enough ; it was like taking a man who cannot swim out of twenty-four feet of water and throwing him back into twelve. Money-lenders, of course, take a man out of twelve feet of water and throw him into twenty-four.

Just about here I struck an unlucky patch. There was that film which was so nearly made of *Responsibility*. Here one of those unfortunate things happened which, though having nothing whatever to do with my pitch, completely queered it. Some reels being landed from America, a bright publicity spark had the notion of using an army band to march them from the ship, round Southampton, and to the railway station. There was a fuss in the papers about this, and the War Office, rapped on the knuckles for lending itself to a flagrant advertising stunt on behalf of an American company, decided that it could not afford to risk co-operation with an English one. The equipment and so forth that we wanted for *Responsibility* was refused, and the project dropped.

The play called *Blessed are the Rich* was all the more un-

fortunate in that it actually took place. Certain friends in Manchester raised two thousand pounds to have this play put on, with a cast headed by Mary Clare. When the curtain fell on the first night at the Vaudeville there was, oddly enough, sufficient applause to tempt me to go on the stage. I intended to say that such parts of the piece as had failed to please were my responsibility since they were part of the novel, whereas anything which had given delight was the unaided work of my collaborator, C. E. Openshaw. But the hurricane of booing did not allow me to speak a word. Is it possible that the gallery, where the booing came from and appeared to be concerted, misunderstood the meaning of the title? The play argued that it is easier for a rich man to be honest than for a poor man, and that in so far as this is true the rich are the more blessed. But the theatre is an odd world and you never know which way the cat will jump. The piece had thirteen performances and my newspaper-cutting book tells me that

. . . On Thursday one stall was sold ; on Friday two paid to go in the stalls, but no one booked a seat for the dress circle. Friday's £19 was nearly all made up by £14 in the pit and £4 in the gallery.

I was present on the last night when the management turned away money from both pit and gallery, which were crowded to suffocation. I think now that it was a bad play.

To be booed off the stage, to be awarded a farthing damages, and have a vital hitch in plans for filming a novel—for this was the order in time—was pretty fair going. On my first day at Giggleswick I was told to report at the head master's study at six o'clock. At that time I was fagging in the long field for the cricket captain, and cut the more important appointment. I had a fit of nerves afterwards and got to sleep through saying over and over again : "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Years later I got through my bad time by constantly repeating to myself : "Fortune knows We scorn her most when most she offers blows."

But there were compensations. Round about now there was a letter from Sybil Thorndike :

ASSAULT ON LONDON

6 Carlyle Square,  
Chelsea, S.W.3.  
Friday.

DEAR JIMMY,

You were very kind to send me a wire—thank you so much. I've been meaning to write for some time to you. I've never had a chance of talking over your book, which interested me tremendously and is clearing up for me the fog in which I seem to be about the theatre. It's queer the way your personality comes out in the book. Do you remember Conrad's reminiscences—how he says nothing about himself and yet what he *is* comes booming through? In a way I felt the same about your book—your tremendous enthusiasms, your fire, and above all your deep love of the theatre and fearlessness in expressing what you feel—all these jump at one. And do you know, Jimmy, that's what such a lot of us feel grateful to you for, and why you hold an affectionate place in us, because though we may want to get up and fight you often and may disagree, yet we feel you *belong* to the theatre, and I'd rather belong to the theatre than anything.

We both send love, and again thanks.

Yours affectionately,

SYBIL THORNDIKE.

Then this from J. B. Fagan came along :

*Garrick Club.*  
*Sunday.*

MY DEAR AGATE,

I have restrained myself from writing to thank you during the week because I wanted to give you results. I am most grateful personally and for the play's sake for the splendid lead you have given the public to the *Cherry Orchard*. There can be no question that you, with one or two others, have turned defeat into what looks like a lasting victory. The facts and figures speak for themselves. In our first week we played to £361. The provisional notice went up on Saturday and arrangements were made to revive the *Beggar's Opera* as quickly as possible. The day after your notice—bank holiday when most theatres were empty—we played to £89 and on the week £604. The advance booking has trebled. Last night we took £111 and at the matinée £61, on a day of record heat. The run at the Lyric cannot



be extended beyond the 20th and we hope in the next few days to arrange a transfer to a West-end theatre.

I have been working for years in the faith that there is a big public for really great plays, well acted and well produced. I have had many disappointments and if the *Cherry Orchard* had gone down I should have been tempted to give up the fight.

You have done a great service to the theatre and for my part I cannot thank you enough.

Hoping to have the pleasure of seeing you soon,

Sincerely yours,

JAMES B. FAGAN.

It was Fagan who, being advised on the first night of his own play *The Improper Duchess* that I was fast asleep in the stalls, said, "Don't wake him. Agate's always very good when he's asleep."

High among my compensations was always my brother Gustave's constant and solicitous interest in my work. Here is a letter which, by the way, begins by telling me the kind of doll I am to send for my niece's birthday :

. . . rag—no pins or loose buttons to swallow, or legs to come off in order that sawdust may be consumed. . . .

The letter goes on :

. . . Now as to the book (*Blessed are the Rich*) I received it from Parsons on Monday and have read it, nearly twice. It is very difficult for me to *see* your work as if it were someone else's, but I can only say I found it most absorbing, intriguing and amusing. Also in places very touching, but this, possibly, may be family associations. It is full of the most amazing satire, especially for a *careful* reader, and an almost bewildering power of observation. But why is it that one thinks of this book, as of *Responsibility*, as being episodic? I think that is just why neither of them is yet your masterpiece, *nor* a "best seller". The two are not, as is often supposed, incompatible. It is not essential that a "best seller" should be a pot-boiler ; in fact, I don't think they ever are. *Blessed are the Rich* has faults, and they are the same faults which prevent it being either (M. or B.S.). It has not the *drive* from start to finish advertised on

the cover. It has exuberance and gusto throughout, which is not the same thing. *Drive*, the essential thing in a masterpiece and also B.S., is concerned with coherence and the quality of being able to be seen easily as a whole. At the end of the book Oliver's beginnings are difficult to remember, whereas they should be easy. He is not a very real person, this Oliver. You make him an author for autobiographical convenience, but he isn't *essentially* one—not in the way Barrie's Sentimental Tommy was, whom he faintly resembles sometimes. I don't want him labelling, y'understand, but I want him to have a personality and a logical *growth* from his own beginnings. Oliver doesn't grow, he jumps. It is that fatal autobiography business which does it, I am afraid. You yourself do not see Oliver as a whole, and you are not particularly interested in him, really. Not as you are in the minor characters—Arch, for instance. All the smaller people are splendidly done though they want a stronger central interest. Oliver is too much of a peg on which you hang them and your own experiences. I think if you had put the book away for six months and come back to it fresh you wouldn't have left it as it is.

Your old mannerisms are less in evidence in this book, though that itch for French is still irritatingly acute, and what I can only call that shocking habit of quoting in it is still prominent. You persistently refuse to take advice about this. If the French references and quotations were essential to the book I wouldn't say a word, but they are not. On the contrary, they always appear to be forced upon us and to savour strongly of showing off. All quotations from Balzac and Flaubert and the Goncourts—especially half-page ones, shoved in just because they are favourite passages of *yours*, must in future be strictly taboo. They are, believe me, such an atrocious mannerism as to amount to BAD STYLE. Perhaps you will take notice of that! You will not learn the truth from brother Edward about your mannerisms, nor yet probably from your cronies to whom you talk about your books. It is the old story—you wouldn't like it if they told you the truth, and they know it. Besides, they are not interested enough in your career to give you thoughtful criticism. Don't I know that one artist never gives anything but praise to another—to his face! It is different with me. I *am* interested enough to tell you of your weak spots, and

am not, like Edward, ready to accept French literary criticism in the middle of a novel. Don't run away with the idea that this is just indiscriminate slanging, or get dispirited about the book. Not many people will appreciate it more than I do. It is only because I know you can do better that I get so wild with you. I am not asking for the impossible, or anything which is beyond your powers. Blue pencils are cheap and easy to wield, and should be applied inexorably to (1) all French quotations and criticism, (2) all your own *opinions* about anything whatsoever—acting especially (George Moore should be taken as a dreadful warning), (3) all *long* descriptions of things interesting to you personally but which don't help your characters to "get on with it".

The foregoing is a characteristic example of my brother in Mycroft vein.

In 1928 Basil Macdonald Hastings died at the age of forty-seven. Mac, as we called him, was struck down in the full flower of life by a fell disease, and his courage during the two years of his sentence and the conduct of what remained to him of life were lessons in virtue. He went about cheerfully, making no fuss and without any notion that he was being heroic. One felt that if he had come by chance upon that passage in which Stevenson prates about life going down "with a better grace foaming in full body over a precipice than miserably straggling to an end in sandy deltas", he would have turned from the handsome sentence and closed the book. Yet he followed Stevenson's prescription rigorously: "By all means, begin your folio; even if the doctor does not give you a year, even if he hesitates about a month, make one brave push and see what can be accomplished in a week." For two years Hastings made his brave push, and he made it not to drown consciousness but on behalf of those he was to leave. Each month and each week he accomplished less and still less till the time came when he could not write in a day what he could normally write in an hour; and at last he could work no more. During these months he went about the town and mingled freely with his friends, talking very rarely of that which was impending; but when he did

talk of it, then calmly and cheerfully. I met him at Lord's towards the end of the season, and he laughed and joked like a man without a care in the world. It was only when, at the close of play, he was getting into his cab that I detected a shade of wistfulness. "This is my last cricket-match," he said, and I hope I did right not to pretend it wasn't. His carelessness may well have been that which goes with uprightness; I do not believe that any one of his friends and colleagues could be found to say that he had ever known a braver man. Self-pity he put entirely from him, and in attempting to show from his writings what manner of man my friend was I shall avoid anything that can be found in them of the pathetic or sentimental. Yet Hastings could feel, and feel abundantly. I remember one night after the O.U.D.S. performance of *Peer Gynt*, going out into the little Oxford street and seeing the familiar, Pickwickian figure under a lamp-post busy with a handkerchief. To my astonishment Hastings was blubbing. I asked what was the matter. He replied: "It's those two lines:

For all of your days I thank you  
For beatings and lullabies!

They always get me. Come and have a drink!"

Mac, dear fellow, brought to life as much gusto as any man who ever lived. Renouncing the trumpet of grandiloquence he chose for his Pan-pipes the themes of commonplace joy and sorrow. And principally joy. He was content to sing the delights of the common man. He had the common touch. Hear him on the generality of his kind: "Ourself is a pretty deserving fellow, take him for all in all. He works steadily, prays, at least when he is frightened, and does what his wife and doctor tell him. He stands at the back and cries 'Hurrah!' at celebrations, he writes crisp little letters to help fill up the columns of the great newspapers. Moreover, he buys 'Washex' and 'Shiney' and 'Killo' in order that those engaged in the manufacture of these commodities may live." Hear him on the summer holiday, the seaside, and that which happens to the armies making annual pilgrimage to the sea: "They acquire sunburn and bear away

trophies, such as local fossils and picture postcards of the burnt pier, the site of the proposed harbour, the proposed public library and the proposed bathing-pool." Or on the highbrow : "There is really nothing like consulting a highbrow when you want to hear something that is funny as well as daft." Would you like a piece of observation which shows how close to life Mac was? Then take this : "How is it that while the purchaser of railway-tickets has always to bend down, the vendor always seems able to stand up?" Besides being stout of heart Mac was stout of stomach. He sang the praise of good food and good beer, and Prohibition revolted him. Milk, he reminded us, is the master-passion of the cat, and all that he would condescend to say of cocoa was that the very consonant and vowels of which its name is composed are unwhisperable. He was a man of the open-air spirit. Take this about riding to hounds upon a hired horse : "One is baffled to perceive the advantage of being tossed over hedges at a guinea an hour when one might be sitting in the back-seat of a charabanc pledged to take one to the meet and back for half-a-crown." And, again, of a young man fond of hunting : "I suspect him to be utterly incapable of doing anything else, so he may as well hunt." There was a point at which his *gourmandise* and his love of the country came together : "What a passionate creature is the turnip ! How eagerly and speedily the seed drives up the tendril to the surface ! The baby turnip does not wait for the sun. It swells to seek it. And as the root forms, note how the white ball climbs from the soil, chooses, indeed, to grow outside its element, so keen is it to achieve its prime. How diligent is the pea ! How hard it is to uproot the cabbage one has reared from a little thing of two leaves to a giant of beautiful though hardened heart ! What pain the dying beetroot has caused me ! I loved his leaves of royal purple, and now his redbreast body bleeds, all sliced in vinegar. How tender and brittle is the radish, always too young to die ! How feminine and frail the spreading leaves of the cabbage lettuce ! How trustful is the potato ! What kind of man am I to devour his eyeless young !" Am I doing my friend an injustice to quote these things as simple humour?

I think not. But if I am, let me recall that he could also write of an excursion to Battle undertaken in a hay-cart : " Opposite where Harold fell, and where are the remains of the high altar, I raised my hat and reflected that it would soon be spring, because desire makes things soon, and I knew the spot would be all aflame with daffodils." My favourite story about Mac is originally of my telling, for I was there when it happened. It was at the Savage Club, where a distinguished chemist was eating a meal composed of a base of buttered toast, a kipper, a middle layer of toast, another kipper, and a final lid of toast. Beaming through his gold spectacles Macdonald Hastings leaned across the table and said : " My dear fellow, what on earth are you eating ? *A tram ?* "

There is irony in the fact that the best play of a man who loved life so much, could be so jolly about it, and was cut off in mid-career, should have for its theme the sin of living too long.

CHAPTER VI  
SOME LETTERS

IT is always said that there is a novel in every man's life. But a novel is a work of art, which means that there can be no loose ends, whereas an autobiography cannot help bristling with them. I suppose that my post-bag in the last fifteen years has averaged some ten or twelve letters a day. Most of these 50,000 letters found their natural receptacle, and once in the delirium of a removal I destroyed all of the rest I could lay hands on. A few escaped, let me hope happily. But no conceivable ingenuity will now connect them, and I see no point in wasting energy in trying. This chapter, then, is headed "Some Letters", and I do not pretend that it contains anything else.

I have these notes from Edgar Wallace :

*Caux Palace Hotel,  
Caux-sur-Montreux,  
Switzerland.*

*Jan. 1, 1928.*

MY DEAR CRITIC,

I'm wishing you a happy New Year to-day—it is a saddening thought that you won't know this until the third at the earliest. I want to say that the more of your stuff I read the more I realise how firmly you write, and how honestly. I think you ought to be spared musical comedies and revues. I despise you only because you have given up writing plays (as far as one can gather). A failure is terribly hurtful to one's proper vanity but the effect should be very stimulating. Good luck to you and good health to you in the New Year.

Yours ever,  
EDGAR WALLACE.

SOME LETTERS

31 *Portland Place, W.1.*  
7th May, 1928.

MY DEAR JAMES,

I am terribly sorry I have kept you hanging about over this story (*Responsibility*), but we have had all our productions held up through a gent whom I can only describe as an American —.

I am going into this story but I cannot promise an early production. The only thing I can promise to do is to fix some sort of arrangement so that you get a little on account. You may, however, be one of these fellows who are superior to this kind of thing, but believe me I never have been yet and hope I never shall be.

I think your criticism of the *Show Boat* was so sane and well balanced that it might have been written by myself in one of my rare and learned moments !!

Kindest regards,

Yours ever,  
EDGAR.

31 *Portland Place, W.1.*  
26th July, 1928.

MY DEAR JIMMY,

What with my being abroad and you being on your holidays, I haven't been able to get into touch. My film people wish to concentrate on my stories this year, hoping to benefit by my popularity. They turned down the two stories of yours mainly because they did not want to do outside stuff. As you know, Jimmy, I've been through the same hoop as you have been. In 1920 I produced a failure and it not only broke my heart but kept me poor. It is a perfectly bloody business recovering, because it seems to effect every branch of one's activities. I know what it is to be short of "ready" and what I'd like to do with you is this. I'd like to pay you £100 for the option of filming your next book. If I took up the option I would pay you a further £500. If the hundred "ready" is of any use to you I will do this with the greatest happiness.

Ever yours,  
EDGAR.

It was a mark of Edgar's loveliness as a man and his greatness as a journalist that nobody was ever envious of



him. All that he won he worked for, working not as those do who seek to make of their work a pedestal for literary fame, but because he had the stomach for labour and could not idle. Work with him was an increasing appetite just because his hunger for living was unappeasable. Edgar had Stevenson's relish for Admirals and prize-fighters, and his own delight in old lags, racecourse touts, racing peers, actors, fighting parsons, and all who retain the spirit of adventure, shady or otherwise. For these he felt, and about them he wrote. His generosity was fabulous, and he had a heart as big as Marie Lloyd's. The leader-writer in a great Northern daily said on the morning after King Edward died that if he had not been a King he would have been the best type of sporting publican. There was a good deal of the sporting publican in Edgar Wallace, and a little, an amusing little, of the taste for kingship. He was monarch of such part of the world as he surveyed, and his slight touch of megalomania, while it amused him, offended nobody. He had no notion that other people could be jealous, and it never occurred to him that anybody might want to throw a stone at the glass cage which he built round his working hours. Not essentially an artist? Perhaps not. Yet though he was content to make words do a job of work for him, and do it sufficiently, whether in the theatre or outside it, he was not unmindful of other craftsmanship; and if you told him that he was a non-commissioned officer in the army of letters he would have accepted the grade and been content.

On a lighter note I find first a charming communication from the landlord of my flat at Palace Court. There seems to have been discussion as to whether bailiffs can effect entrance after sunset:

. . . Your Royal guest's assumption that you could not be disturbed after sun-down by the gentlemen referred to was correct, but with the approach of spring you will no doubt appreciate the danger of fewer hours of immunity. . . .

During my presidency of the O.P. Club I was invited to take the chair at a meeting of the Gallery First Nighters' Club, which was accustomed to hold its jamborees in a large room in a small

public-house. The guest of the evening was John Barrymore, who was to lecture on "The American Stage in Relation to the English", or some such title. The customary procedure was for the chairman to introduce the guest in a speech not exceeding five minutes, after which the guest was supposed to speak for an hour. The meeting would then adjourn for refreshments and reassemble later for questions. To my horror Barrymore dried up at the end of seven minutes and sat down. Heaven knows how I did it, but I at once filled in forty desperate minutes on a subject of which I knew nothing. In the interval I said: "John Barrymore, I'm ashamed of you." He replied: "For Heaven's sake give me a drink. I can't speak on an empty soul." After the interval he promised to do anything I commanded. So we went back to the room and I said:

"Members of the Gallery First Nighters' Club, you have never beheld our famous guest except through an intervening chandelier. I have the extreme pleasure to announce that for your especial benefit he will now recite three of the big soliloquies in *Hamlet*." Barrymore pulled a long face, threw off first the "To be or not to be" speech, and then the "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" Being then warmed up to his work, he resumed his abortive lecture and gave a brilliant talk of three-quarters of an hour, in the course of which he alluded to "that vestal virgin of dramatic criticism, James Agate!" This is the letter he wrote me on going back to America:

*Ritz Hotel,*  
*Piccadilly, W.1.*  
*25th April.*

MY DEAR MR. AGATE,

I am sailing to the patchouli'd environs of Hollywood on Thursday to engage in commerce by painting my profile one odd colour after another, and before I go I want merely to send you a line to thank you for your kindness to me during these, my first significant days in England. I am sorry I could not have seen more of you between labour, luncheons, exhaustion and fatuous public utterances; it has been slightly difficult for me to function as a human being,

which in spite of being an actor I still insist on as part of my birthright as a fisherman. I shall be back in a few months, and before I begin painting my nose again, could not we get together and ascertain definitely if Château Yquem is what it used to be?

Good-bye and many thanks. It has all been great fun, and I shall never forget it.

Yours most sincerely,

JOHN BARRYMORE.

By this time I had become dramatic critic to the B.B.C. and the next letter reminds me of a quarrel of which I was the unwilling focus. It was sent to an editor and is as follows :

10th October, 1929.

DEAR SIR,

The Management of the — Theatre will be much obliged if you will very kindly co-operate with them in safeguarding the enclosed invitation from being used for the purpose of broadcasting a notice of the play from any station of the British Broadcasting Corporation. The invitation is intended to meet the convenience of legitimate journalism, exclusive of broadcasting.

The quarrel is dead and buried, largely owing to a letter to *The Times* signed by a dozen of the best-known theatre-managers who gallantly came forward to uphold wireless dramatic criticism, and to *The Times's* leading article on the subject.

And here is a letter from Dame Madge Kendal, commenting on my note that the dress of the early Victorian female, while depriving her of breath and motion, certainly gave her elegance.

34 Portland Place,  
W.I.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

I must write—I must. I cannot allow you to write about the “scant breath” of the early Victorian Era. You are a wonderful critic—tho’ sometimes your irony is caustic—but I love it. Still I thank the Gods I had retired before you arrived!

You shall continue in your useful humour and knowledge

## SOME LETTERS

of actors and theatres—from the Greek to St. Martin's Lane. But on the waist line of a woman's clothing—you—even you—must take care. That "scant breath" time had sons like Lord Ribblesdale, Duke of Rutland, ex-Kaiser, Natcombe Gould, Godfrey Tearle, Lord Kitchener, Redvers Buller, all nearly six feet high. What has chiffon clasped at the waist with ungloved hands—knees—upper part of arms—all the ugly anatomy achieved? No, no—give me the waist line. Exposure of the lungs and chest and upper arm has increased consumption, asthma. To-day we have tiny, tiny men and women naked and unashamed. Our young women play golf and cricket; the old actresses were fined if they endangered ankles and elbows.

I could say more. The rest is silence. Forgive this tirade, and encourage in the name of Humanity—and then Art may follow—the abused early-Victorian, womanly style of dress.

Yours in sincerity,

MADGE KENDAL.

And here is a note from the handy-man, gardener, factotum whom I engaged to look after me at my country cottage at Beaconsfield :

DEAR SIR,—This is to inform you that Arnold has left your employment, and you will find the key on the hall table.

If the essence of style is to say what you mean in the fewest possible words, then I think the writer of the foregoing is a stylist who has missed his way in life.

I spent the autumn of 1930 translating for Gilbert Miller a German play on the subject of Dreyfus. With German thoroughness I asked a leading London book-seller to forward me all the books in English on the subject. In reply he asked where the motor-lorry should deliver them, and could he have a hundred pounds on account? I mugged the subject up pretty thoroughly—so thoroughly that to this day at the very name of Scheurer-Kestner I fall into an epilepsy. In three months, with the help of my brother Edward's knowledge of German and the sweat of Jock's brow, I produced the translation, which had become an adaptation, and received from Miller this letter :

EGO

*Empire Theatre,  
Broadway and Fortieth Street,  
New York City.*

*September 11th, 1930.*

MY DEAR JAMES AGATE,

Forgive my delay in writing you about your adaptation of *Dreyfus*, but a careful comparison with the original text took a certain amount of time.

Attached hereto is a list of all my notes. I suggest that instead of altering the mss., you send me a list of such changes as you wish to make. Will you kindly send me your notes, numbered in the same order as my list? Where we hold different opinions as to the suggested changes, I shall be glad to receive your comments.

I am very anxious to have all the French phraseology eliminated. Instead of "Vive la France" I propose to have the characters say, "To France." Basil Dean had the characters in *Beau Geste* use a lot of French, and I imagine the memory of those bi-lingual actors in French uniforms has prejudiced me for ever against hearing French spoken by alleged Frenchmen.

I am delighted with your adaptation, which is by far the finest English equivalent of a foreign text that has ever fallen into my hands.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,

GILBERT MILLER.

The alterations were duly made, and I proposed the late George Bealby for the chief part of Zola. An interesting thing about this play was that Dreyfus never appeared in it. Then somebody else popped in with a film of Dreyfus, with Cedric Hardwicke as the hero, and once more my pitch was queered. I understand that you can with impunity produce a film after a play, but not the other way round. Gilbert Miller also understood this perfectly, and so my adaptation came to nothing.

Here are some letters which show that for once in a way I have had a hand in something which has come to something. The first three are from the late Gwladys Wheeler, for a long time the enthusiastic and hard-working secretary of the

Stage Society. She often supped at Rules with Clifford Bax—a splendid fellow who, when he is not writing plays, lends his genius to the game of cricket. He is tall, with the appearance of a slightly damaged Saint, and his little beard turns up with an air of benevolence towards the world in general. But at the wicket he is a lion and all his scoring strokes are sixes. Oddly enough, after knowing Gwladys Wheeler for some years I discovered that she was the sister of my Brigade-Major at Chiseldon. She was a charming woman and I respected and liked her equally. At one of those suppers at Rules she introduced me to a young man, who looked the oddest compound of scarecrow and eaglet. Leaping to the conclusion that the young man wanted my advice about going on the stage, I promptly jumped down his throat with the warning that six months of the hardest profession in the world—if taken seriously and I presumed he hadn't any other intention—would kill a whipper-snapper so completely devoid of physique. I was telling the boy to give up all hopes of getting on the stage when he stammered something about being already on it and having served three years with Reinhardt. This nonplussed me, and gave him a chance to talk, which he did very intelligently. He told me his name was Stephen Haggard. The letters from Gwladys Wheeler are as follows :

*Connaught Theatre,  
Worthing.*

9.4.30.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

It was very sad that you couldn't come to supper last night, but I do understand ! Eleven theatres in one week is too much altogether !

Now for the great adventure ! I'm helping to organise a repertory theatre at Worthing, where there is no theatre now ; we have taken a concert hall, seating about four hundred, with a beautiful stage, and are having it re-seated and have obtained a licence ! We are going to put on simple but good stuff. We open with *Art and Mrs. Bottle* on 25th, and amongst other things are going to do *Young Woodley*, *Journey's End*, *The Silver Cord*, *Interference*, etc., etc. I

propose starting in conjunction with it a club to hold debates, etc., and I want sometimes to get well-known authorities on the stage, and its numerous adjuncts, to come and speak. My idea of Worthing is that intellectual snobism is a very live factor, so I am asking all the well-known people I know if they will let me use their names as patrons ! May I use your name ? Of course, if it were ever possible for you to come down for a week-end and speak, I should be in the tenth heaven ! Stephen Haggard is of our company, until his father comes home in July. It will be quite good experience for him I feel, as he can look into all sides of it. . . .

Yours very sincerely,  
GWLADYS WHEELER.

Then this :

. . . I've been here now for three weeks studying the psychology of the Worthingites, and I am quite convinced that a repertory theatre here should do well ; but, it's hard work getting it going ! The Worthingites are very conservative, and want to be quite sure that they are doing the right thing before they patronise a new venture !! I feel that if I could get a few words in the best London papers about our work it would do us an infinite amount of good, more than any advertising either in the local papers or by posters. We are now doing *Journey's End*, next week *Interference*, and for Whitsuntide *The Unfair Sex*. Stephen Haggard is brilliant, I think he will go a very long way. I would love you to see him as Raleigh in *Journey's End*. . . .

And last this :

30 Albion Street, W.2.  
April 21st, 1930.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

If you can come to Worthing, I terribly want you to !! Stephen Haggard is, I think, a *really* great juvenile, with the makings of more, and I'd love you to see him. He plays the part of Michael Bottle in *Art and Mrs. Bottle* opening next Saturday and continuing until the Saturday night of the next week. It's a *lovely* performance, and at any rate, from one member of the cast, he isn't getting any help !

Yrs. v. sincerely,  
GWLADYS WHEELER.

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Now comes a letter from Nancy Price, dated February 26th, 1931 :

*People's Theatre,  
at The Fortune,  
Russell Street. W.C.2.*

DEAR MR. AGATE,

I saw your friend Mr. Haggard yesterday. I like him immensely and he impressed me as being unusually intelligent and keen—I shall do my very best for him.

There is nothing that would in the least suit him in the next play, but I am letting him be about the theatre because he told me that he wants experience of all sorts, which I certainly can give him. He is anxious to know *all* about the stage, and is beginning by walking on in the Court scene in *The Silver Box*. That is the spirit I like—I am sure he will get on.

Yours sincerely,

NANCY PRICE.

It seems to me to have been extraordinarily modest of Haggard that at the interview alluded to he did not tell Miss Price of his previous work with Reinhardt and the Worthing Repertory Company. I have certainly never heard of any other young actor with a number of leading rôles behind him pleading to be allowed "to be about" a theatre. But the point I want to make is that, while Gwladys Wheeler first discovered young Haggard, I appear to have swallowed my words at Rules and tried to help him. Poor Gwladys's death occurred a few days before the production of *The Laughing Woman*, in which Haggard made an initial and sensational success. I know that he grieved very much for the wise, witty, good and clever friend who had not only taken care of him, but cared also for his art.

Should actors write to critics? The answer is that they shouldn't but that some actresses do. A very famous actress whom I had accused of a lisp-cum-hot-potato delivery wrote to say that I had frightened her into a nursing-home, where she had been lying for days trying to think of some way to frighten me! The letter went on :

. . . You frightened me so much about my voice that I went to a specialist, and as I want the worst for you I'd



like to find some way of making *you* go to a specialist. But I give up. I know I can't do it. Even if I were to point out to you that the "problem posed" was nothing like what you told your millions of readers it was, still I know I couldn't frighten you about your brain, because you (and I) know that, for as much of the play as you saw and heard, your brain did a good job, not to say brilliant. . . .

The letter covered five large closely-filled pages, since the lady was extremely angry. The specialist advised a slight operation, which was entirely successful, and the lady returned to the stage to become very nearly my favourite actress. Off the stage she is the witty, intelligent, glorious, vital creature that she is on, and I have always been glad to think that I tore up five equally vituperative pages in which I told her where naughty-tempered actresses get off! The letter I actually sent said simply :

DEAR MISS —

I was so sorry to hear that you were poorly and am so glad to see that you are getting better.

Another lady who wields a valiant pen is Miss Fay Compton, whose personal appearance in *Autumn Crocus* I had ventured to criticise adversely. This was the sentimental play which Billy Leonard, with his quick gift for getting to the root of things, said ought to have been called "Autumn Pocus".

*Lyric Theatre, W.*

*Tuesday, April 14th/31.*

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

First of all I want to thank you for the lovely things you have been saying lately.

But I wish to "carp" slightly, when you say that no Manchester school-mistress could ever manage to look as fetching as you very kindly say that I do. I am really only following out the instructions in the authoress' script—the exact words are, previous to Fanny's second entrance :

"The stage is empty for a moment, and then Fanny in a mauve dressing-gown comes to the top of the stairs. Her hair is down and she no longer wears her spectacles : one is astonished to see that she looks very pretty—she also looks very young, and yet, one is not quite sure."

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I know after reading these lines you will see that I was only trying to carry out the authoress' wishes !!

Incidentally, there are *some* pretty school-mistresses. There is a lady called Madeleine Carroll, who is, after all, an indescribably lovely lady, and was, previous to her film work, but a school-mistress !

Forgive all this nonsense, but it is fun writing, and I know you won't mind, as the real object of my letter is to thank you most sincerely for all your great encouragement.

My best wishes to you always.

Sincerely,

FAY COMPTON.

A letter from John Gielgud :

7 Upper St. Martin's Lane,  
W.C.2.

April 23rd, 1931.

DEAR JAMES,

Your notice of *Lear* was extremely instructive and much better than I deserved, especially after your sage counsel not to attempt the part. But it seemed to me a more exciting wind-up than the revival of *Hamlet*, which would otherwise have been the order of the day. My great fear with this was that it would be either funny or quite negligible, neither of which I hope is entirely the case. Certainly you and Ivor Brown have taken me most seriously, and I am greatly pleased and flattered that it should be so. You have indeed been a tower of strength these two seasons in doing me good turns (and the theatre too) and I shall always remember your really fine championing both of *Hamlet* and *The Cherry Orchard* with much gratitude.

I trust you will soon be taking a summer holiday, otherwise I shall send you myself a whole parcel of bricks to hurl at my head in *The Good Companions*, a very strange potpourri of English life ! Be that as it may, I must anyhow tender you my thanks for your interest and advice in Waterloo Road. I imagine that to have to see the same actor more than three times in a year is a trial to any critic—perhaps it's just as well you're a Shakespeare fan apart from—or shall I say despite—all efforts at performance.

Sincerely,

Yours etc.,

JOHN GIELGUD.

EGO

Acceding to my request to reprint, John wrote :

*Wyndham's Theatre,*  
*W.C.2.*

*September 6th.*

MY DEAR JAMES,

Of course I shall be delighted and flattered that you care to include my letter, in spite of the involved grammar and halting periods which I regret to find included in it. But it's hard enough to live up to the Terry acting standard ; I cannot hope to attempt its literary ease as well. I shall greatly look forward to your book.

Yours ever,

JOHN.

W. Graham Browne reproves me in the vein in which I like to be reproved. Besides, I would stand anything from the husband of Marie Tempest.

*55 Avenue Road,*  
*Regent's Park, N.W.8.*  
*20th Mar., '32.*

MY DEAR JAMES,

While I still think you a monumental ass for your attitude towards our little farce at the Ambassadors I am at this moment taking off my hat, genuflecting, abasing myself, anything you like, to you for your masterly essay on acting in to-day's *Sunday Times*. I intend to have it printed and distribute copies to all companies I am called on to "produce". You have said in a column what I have been stammering over for years.

I have been rehearsing Miss X for the past fortnight and I have been wrestling with her tendency to substitute feeling for expression. She is intelligent and is trying to do what I am asking of her. The result will most probably be that she will be rather bad in the transition period between "being" and "acting", but I think she will arrive eventually. She has a keen sense of humour and a gift for an odd sort of perky comedy that is quite unexpected. If the show comes to London and she fails to come up to your expectations, blame me, but also forgive me, for it is almost inevitable that the actor who is "natural" should be irritatingly artificial in the first stages of telling the fellow in the gallery what was delightfully obvious to the stalls.

Her speech I cannot reform, very much at any rate, but

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when she gets back I'll try to get her to go to Elsie Fogerty—it's a fault in voice production. That process will put her out of the running for a bit too, but I think she's worth a few set-backs, for she has a gift of some sort.

You're bigoted, fat-headed, wrong, irritating, discursive, potty, but you've written a damned good article and I'm very grateful to you.

Love from both,

WILLIE B.

Humbert Wolfe went one better by writing me a letter in elegant verse. I had written in the *Daily Express* a friendly attack beginning :

Mr. Humbert Wolfe (Whom equally with Dr. Strabimus God Preserve) has been falling foul of Messrs. Peter Davies for recently issuing *Voltaire*, by M. André Maurois, and *Julius Caesar*, by Mr. John Buchan, and it is lawful to ask in the friendliest fashion who is Humbert that he should fail to commend an admirable firm and two serviceable, well-written, and beautifully presented handbooks.

The answer, again in the friendliest terms, is that Humbert is the most exquisite of our minor poets, always granted the possibility that all poets are major, and that as a reviewer his note is to be, like Ethel Monticue, "rather sneery", which comes from his possessing a brow higher than any yet invented and then some, which again means that at intellectual parties he is the Wolfe hostesses are most anxious to get to their door. Mr. Wolfe's complaint is that half a biographical loaf is worse than no bread, and *a fortiori* that odd crumbs are despicable. . . .

Whereupon Humbert sent me the following letter :

*The Athenæum,*  
*Pall Mall, S.W.1.*  
*Saturday, April 9th/32.*

MY DEAR AGATE,

As a contribution to the quarrel upon which we appear to be engaged I do not think that I can do worse than to send you this sonnet—for such your use as your conscience, or your editor may dictate.

Yours ever,

HUMBERT WOLFE,

P.S. It is no use casting agates before wolves,

EGO

And the sonnet, which we delightedly printed in the *Express* the following week, was as follows :

TO AN AGATE

Say, shall I call you semi-precious stone,  
or, without reservation, simply gem,  
Agate ? Or, if words fail, will deeds atone,  
such as, e g, kissing your garment's hem ?  
For when the highbrows threatened, you alone  
stood for the people, while you proved with phlegm  
(And variations on the saxophone)  
you were a Briton, and you felt with them  
" Drink deep or taste not " is a foolish motto  
for those, like you, whose tap is half and half,  
Of which the froth alone will make you blotto  
enough to write poor Humbert's epitaph  
" He could not help attempting to refine ore  
His brow was major, but his verse was minor "

A writer who appears to like me less is the author of the three following letters :

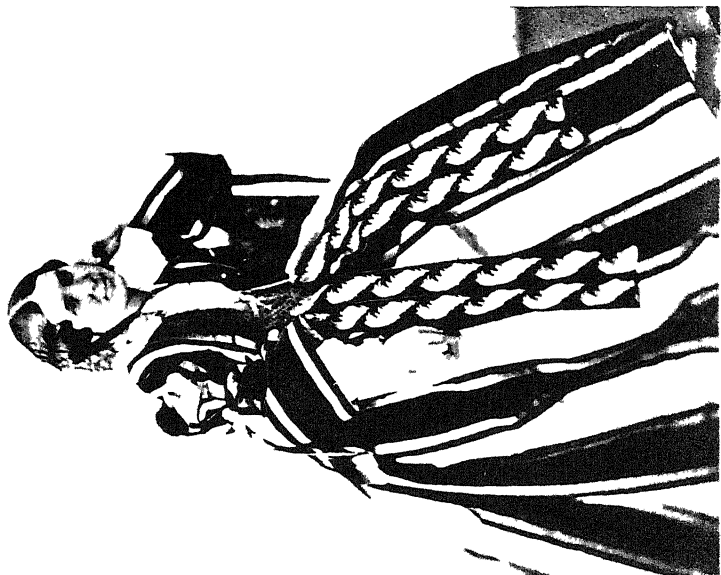
*Sunday, April 10/32.*

DEAR POMPONIOUS EGO,

For diplomatic reasons this letter must be anonymous. You write pontifically always ; why write in jargon ? Is not the English tongue sufficiently copious ? You wrote jargon in your novels and the only literature they contain is the page-long quotations from Balzac. In to-day's *Sunday Times* it is to be noted that you have drawn upon other languages for the following :

Mutatis mutandis  
Optique du théâtre  
Ultima ratio

All these are unnecessary and are bad literary form, as you ought to know by now. Your correspondent recommends an abatement of arrogance in your compositions, and a less constipated method of syntax : you will never have style, so why not improve your method ? Method can sometimes delude one into a belief that style is there when it is not. Witness the work of R.L.S. Adieu.



*Buchhol und Lt. R. v. Feller*



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DEAR POMPONIUS EGO,

" . . . And I'll plague the Abbot of Aberbrothock."

SCOTT.

Your ladylike correspondent is constrained to tell you that your lucubration of Sunday, 17th April, was worse than ever. It seems to be of no avail to point out your appalling left-handedness. Sunday's contribution contains these gems :

Lever (French)  
Ménage  
Maison tolérée  
Furtiva lagrima  
Patronne.

All are unnecessary. I commend to your notice *The Ravenswing*, by Thackeray. He deliciously burlesques your method. May the gods give you enlightenment.

X.

Your ladylike correspondent has noticed with pleasure an abatement of the "Pomponius Ego" style in the last three issues of the *Sunday Times*. You are writing in a more manly and less affected manner. You have a great chance to become a really notable critic. It can be accomplished by entirely dropping the irritating suggestion of superiority. Don't be "superior". That deceased hound Clement Scott used to be superior—and he ended in obloquy. Keep the stuff clean and straightforward and from the heart. Avoid verbal vanity. Leave that to the little chaps on the other rags. You have it in you to become a real force for the Drama's good. Don't forget your county. It produces naturally the finest critics of any kind of show. My last word is to write in a "Lancashire frame of mind". It always touches the spot, and produces the exact and just criticism.

X.

The next letter is from C. B. Cochran and is about Delysia's accent :

49 Old Bond Street,  
W.1.

16th February, 1933.

MY DEAR JIMMIE,

It doesn't matter very much whether Delysia's accent is Parisian or not, but she was born in the Boulevard Voltaire,



went to one of the schools in the Quartier, worked in a dress-making establishment in the Rue de la Paix, and won the Midinettes' Race through Paris round about 1904 or 1905. I can't recall the year, but at that time I sent a lot of attractions to my friend, P. L. Flers, who was running the Moulin Rouge, and I remember the prize-giving on the stage and that he engaged her for the chorus of *The Belle of New York*.

Then she went into the chorus at the Variétés, where Offenbach was being done. (Max Dearly recalled this in Alice's dressing-room on Saturday night.) She was in the chorus at the Folies-Bergère with Yvonne Printemps and in the chorus at the Femina. Up to that time, I should think it very unlikely that she had ever left Paris.

I know her mother, who is a typical Montmartroise, and her brother, and I have met her grandmother and a cousin named Lapize, who was the French Champion in the great days of track cycle racing.

Jacques Charles, who was running Olympia, Paris, at the time I engaged Delysia from there, has just sent me an interesting book called *From Gaby Deslys to Mistinguett*. In it he devotes a whole chapter to Delysia, whom he describes as France's best Ambassadors to England. He calls her dressing-room in London a "Coin de Paris".

Yours as ever,

CHARLES B. COCHRAN.

A letter from Ernest Newman on the new type in the *Sunday Times*.

Polperro,  
Epsom Lane,  
Tadworth,  
Surrey.  
9.11.30.

DEAR AGATE,

I have an idea that Rees told me a long while ago that he had in mind a change of type for us two ; but I experienced no emotion of any sort at the announcement. After all, what does it matter what sort of type is used to set forth the wisdom of people like ourselves ? An extra large and well-spaced type may be necessary to induce the public to read some people ; but do *we* need these humiliating aids ? Moreover, large type may be a godsend to writers who dry

up—or ought to dry up—after a column or so, but copious souls like us, who are already hampered in our generous flow by the fact that a column is as short as it is, would it really be a benefit to us or to the reader to cut us down by spacing us out? You surely wouldn't imperil the future of British culture for the sake of the mere æsthetic aspect of our respective columns!

I am glad to see you always in such good form. Go down on your bended knees to-night and thank the God who made you that he didn't make you a musical critic. At any rate you have always something fresh to go to and write about, instead of having to follow the doings of a lot of performing fleas who can do only the half-dozen tricks they learned in their infancy.

Yours always,  
ERNEST NEWMAN.

I have two godsons. One of them is the son of Edgar Baerlein, occasional Open and many times Amateur Tennis and Racquets Champion. After keeping wicket for Eton Tony Baerlein decided, first that Cambridge would be sheer waste of time, and second that he must devote the whole of life to what he calls Pure Film. I have a letter, written within a year of leaving Eton, in which he says:

"*Cavalcade* is a bad film because no significant use is made of the medium, and because a theatrical interpretation of every scene is retained. In fact, the losses sustained by the film are enormous and of all kinds. These include one dimension, the personality of flesh-and-blood actors, and their natural speech. The only gain is the substitution of more realistic sets which a strict judgment might construe as yet another loss. 'Spectacle,' the producer obviously reflected. 'Ah! The screen can hold even more actors than Drury Lane. That is where the cinema beats the theatre. Here is spectacle. We will make it spectacular.' So he built several sets, all bigger than Drury Lane Theatre and all much more real than the stage scenery, and splashed them with people dressed in the appropriate period, and said: 'Here is a cavalcade of years!' Eisenstein says that the mechanical sticking-together process is as opposite to rhythm as the mechanical-metric Mensendiek system is

opposite to the organic-rhythmic Bode school in matters of bodily expression. Montage, properly interpreted, resembles Japanese hieroglyphics, where two independent ideographical signs, placed in juxtaposition, explode to a new concept. Thus :

Eye plus Ear equal To weep  
 Door plus Ear equal To Eavesdrop  
 Child plus Mouth equal To cry  
 Mouth plus Dog equal To bark  
 Mouth plus Birds equal To sing."

I was tremendously impressed by this, and hearing that Sydney Carroll wanted an assistant stage producer, offered my godson's services. Carroll wrote :

4 Greville Street, E.C.1.  
 2nd June, 1932.

DEAR JAMES,

I am afraid the personal interviews I have had with young Baerlein have not impressed me with any sense of his capacity, but perhaps in that I am doing him a grave injustice.

He seems an ultra-modest, uncertain and retiring boy of almost feminine sensibility who would be quite unable to be of any practical value in these aggressive and assertive times. If I gave him a commission to execute of any kind I should live in fear and trembling of it being carried out either to my satisfaction or his own.

If he had a hundredth part of his godfather's pugnacity I should not hesitate a moment.

If you like I will allow him £1 a week for his expenses to wait in attendance on my respective producers as messenger and executant of small commissions. Will that meet your ideas ?

Sincerely yours,  
 SYDNEY CARROLL.

The proposal met not only my ideas, but my godson's, and for some months I am given to understand he fetched and carried admirably. I have told him to cut his hair, grow an incipient beard, change his name to Bpmst, take a Thames steamer to Southend, and land indicating by signs that he comes from Czelakowitz and knows no word of English. As a matter of fact he is an extremely good sort, with any amount

of brains, a great sense of fun, and as much feminine sensibility as a bullock.

My other godson is a far from moody Dehn. He has a pretty wit. I motored up to see him when he was head boy at Shrewsbury, or something of the sort, and presented him with the traditional sovereign, whereupon he asked whether next time I came up I should not find the journey more agreeable if I came in a car twice the size ! Here is a letter written to me during his second year at Oxford :

Woodheys,  
Heaton Mersey,  
Manchester.

DEAR UNCLE JAMES,

Your godson is following, very tentatively, in his godfather's footsteps. He has just been offered the post of dramatic critic to the *Cherwell Magazine*—with a monopoly of the Playhouse performances—provided that Big Men like James Agate don't step in and offer themselves instead. So his foot is planted firmly, as the newspapers say, upon the first rung of the Ladder to Fame. Also he is writing a novel, called *Nothing Left Remarkable*, which is going to take the world by storm. At the moment the storm is a very little one—two and a half chapters to be exact—but it'll grow.

And another term is over at Oxford. I've been there a year now and I've got the whole of the long vac. in which to think things over. It isn't as perfect as Shrewsbury—nothing ever will be—but it's far more interesting. Everybody's in the last stages of growing up, and to watch all that was beautiful in a boy turning into all that is coarse and revolting in a man is a pretty sad sight and one that is responsible for a wholly unjustified spate of cynicism and disillusion. Unless you're a "hearty" (a very kind type of gorilla), cynicism and an attitude of thwarted idealism are the keywords here, at the moment.

I've sent a lot of my poetry up to *Oxford Verse* 1932, but the closing date was only yesterday and I've heard nothing yet. The book's sure to be cram full of modern unintelligibility, which I hate. I have a satisfying theory that many of the poets, who write incomprehensible poetry to-day, are the products of an advanced vice ; they have their lovely thoughts, but their imaginations are so warped either by

drink or decrepit sensuality that they are incapable of being coherent and regular. Their verse is a tangled skein of Beauty whose thread they are too idle, too dissipated and too morally debauched to unravel for the benefit of others.

But they've done one good thing. Some of them have shown us beauty in ugliness, which is the surest bulwark against disillusion, because shattered ideals are chiefly due to a conventionally preconceived standard of Beauty. If we could learn to see loveliness in a faded rose, in old age or a broken friendship we should never be disillusioned.

And now I've been precocious and philosophical for three pages and you're probably fermenting with mature judgments, so I'll stop. My next letter, I promise, will be severely lyrical.

Please write soon, and if you're very good I may present you with a complimentary first edition of my novel, although a second edition would probably prove more of a rarity. My love to Jock—I enjoyed seeing him ever so much—and heaps to yourself.

PAUL.

The boy had been sent to Oxford as the result of a letter I wrote to his father, who had asked my advice as to his son's career. I append what I wrote because it may be of service to other young men, and perhaps to other fathers :

MY DEAR FRED,\*

I have thought your letter over and it seems to me to fall into two heads, (a) Paul's bent, and (b) Oxford. Now (b) depends upon (a), so we will take (a) first.

#### JOURNALISM OR LAW?

I don't think it's any good forcing a man into a job he doesn't like. In fact he *must* do what he wants. I think when we get old enough we see that having done what we were cut out for is the thing that has mattered. I don't now believe that a successful doctor who hates medicine is ever really happy, but I do believe that a very small amount of success in a man's own line will give him a reasonable amount of happiness.

Further, if Paul really wants to become a journalist he will

\* During the war my friend Fritz changed his name to Fred, with my full and entire disapproval.

become one some time or other. And it is much better to study to succeed in journalism, as Arnold Bennett studied to succeed as an author, than to drift into it after twenty years of doing something else.

The only other point on this head is whether Paul really understands what journalism is. Once inside a newspaper-office there are four kinds of journalists corresponding to a paper's four sides : (a) the news side, (b) the contributors' side, (c) the editorial side, (d) the managing side, including advertising, etc. No young man of nineteen can know in which of these his bent lies. Paul must make up his mind that it is journalism and not literature that he means. He must not make the mistake of going in for journalism as a back-door to literature. He must embrace journalism for its own sake.

#### OXFORD OR NOT ?

I think Yes, on every head. Of the advantages of a stay at a university I need not say anything. Nor need I make the point that Paul must not regard Oxford as the thin end to the vulgar wedge of self-advancement. Paul is a gent, and will not want telling. But Oxford is also useful in this, that if he can make his mark there he will certainly attract the attention of some influential person in or near the newspaper world. This is the one royal entry to journalism, for it was success at Oxford which gave their newspaper entrée to G. H. Mair, Beverley Nichols, Philip Guedalla, Harold Nicolson, Edward Shanks, and many others. But it must be personal and literary success, not a scholastic one.

If Paul were going in for law it would be otherwise. But as a journalist he must join the Union and every society which invites celebrities down from London to address it. He must write for every University periodical and try to edit one. He must, without putting on side, get himself remarked as a young man who is going to be a literary personality. The chance of drawing attention is only a chance and not a certainty. But if it comes off, his way is made. In addition it gives him a *cachet* which he can never afterwards attain.

If this fails, Paul can try the shirt-sleeve entry into journalism, beginning by sweeping up the office, which is what you

did at Jaffé's and I did at the mill. This is a longer way and necessarily second, for it is Oxford now or never.

Further, Paul is too young for London, and it is not good to throw a schoolboy into this sink that he may do ditto. Three years of self-reliance at Oxford will help him when he comes to town, because, in my view, the change from school discipline to complete freedom is too big.

Under no circumstances must you have anything to do with people who run journalistic classes or offer to put a young man into journalism in return for a premium. For they will take your money and do absolutely nothing except use the boy as typist.

But get Paul to make himself into a good typist. He need not learn shorthand but he should invent and practise some kind of abbreviated long-hand enabling him to take down instructions or make notes with maximum rapidity. He should not proclaim that he can do these two things because they are supposed to be the mark of the drudge. But they will be of infinite practical value to him.

There is this to be said about journalism, that "it is dogged as does it". But doggedness *will* do it, and if Paul is of the right stuff he will succeed. He will not have to wait for success to come as a doctor or a barrister must. In journalism the right man can *make* success come to him because he will go to it.

One last suggestion. If there is a gap between school and Oxford, why not send Paul abroad for a little? Let him look at pictures in Florence or something of the sort. If he is to adopt the Oxford way any culture he can now rapidly acquire will be of immense value. He probably speaks German, and as he has no French I should send him to France among French people, if only for a month or two. It costs a little but it is worth while, and as he is a good boy he will not waste the money.

One word more. Prepare Paul for an immense amount of drudgery. Quite rightly, he will be all ideals at the moment. If ever you want, he can spend a week or a fortnight with me. He will then realise that the life of a journalist is like that of the famous Harley-street consultant who spends most of his time curing biliousness and common colds.

Ever,  
JIMMIE.

## CHAPTER VII

### KALEIDOSCOPE

IT is said that a drowning man sees the whole of his life in a flash. Should that happen to me—and I have taken the precaution of not learning to swim—my mind will be the oddest jumble :

Of my father, whose passion it was to hire a wagonette and pair and seek out inaccessible places in Derbyshire, Yorkshire or Wales by roads Roman or otherwise disused.

Of my mother who, when we were pausing breathless at the top of some steep hill up which we had pulled and pushed her bath-chair, would say : “ You can go on now, dears ; I’m quite rested.”

Of those early Hallé concerts. I used to be taken down by tram and deposited at the Reform Club in King Street, where I would sit in the porter’s lodge while my father finished his dinner. Or sometimes I would be taken up to him and given a sweet. We would then walk to the Free Trade Hall, through Albert Square and past the begrimed and gloomy statues of the Prince Consort and some Liberal worthies. Our seats were in the gallery, to the left of the conductor and immediately behind the pianist, whose finger-work I was supposed to emulate. The orchestra always used to stand up for Norman Neruda when she entered, and I remember wondering why she always played the Mendelssohn concerto. She was extremely ugly but very graceful, and I have never seen such bowing. The Christmas performance of the *Messiah* was a most impressive business. As far as I remember the principal singers were always Albani, Ada Crossley, Edward Lloyd, and Charles Santley. The soprano seemed to be very much higher up in the social scale than the contralto ; at



least, she was always better dressed. There was the tiniest air of the high-class publican or professional billiard-player about Lloyd ; he was a little too oily, and redolent of Masonic banquets. Santley seemed very old and very tired, and would dodder like a worn-out horse ; sometimes I thought he had the palsy. When he got to the end of " Why do the Nations " he was utterly done, and at no time did I think his voice pleasant to listen to. To this day my favourite nightmare is that I come up the stairs from the artists' room, pass the conductor, take my seat, fiddle with the contraption for raising or lowering it, place my hands above the keyboard ready for the opening crash, nod to Sir Charles—and then realise that I have not been allowed to see the score of the new piano concerto I am performing !

Of having my first boy's suit made by a tailor called Macbeth, and being firmly convinced that Shakespeare's character must be the tailor's grandfather or something of the sort.

Of the first of my three fights. I was coming home from school and walking down Langworthy Road—the upper part, of course. The lower part was unspeakably middle class and contained that council school which, later, was to have among its pupils Walter Greenwood, the author of *Love on the Dole*. A street urchin offering what in the army is known as dumb insolence, I gave him battle, and might have won if this ill-mannered proletarian had not started butting with his forehead, to which I did not know the proper counter.

I lost again when a boy at Mr. Clegg's said that his mother was as good as mine.

My last defeat is almost too shameful to tell. This was at Giggleswick, and I had been kidded into mimic boxing in one of the studies with a thin zany about a head and a half taller than I was. I used to give him mock thrashings and one day he challenged me in earnest. The fight lasted two rounds and even my memories of it are painful. That afternoon we were translating Schiller's *Thirty Years War*, and when it came to my turn the first words were " This decisive battle ". I could see that the form-master noticed the con-

dition of my face, and I was grateful to him for saying nothing. This was the same master who in one of our house-matches landed the finest goal I have ever seen, from a try six inches within the side line. He had to trust the wind to help him, and it did.

Of Jevons major bringing in a Bible to prayers the day his younger brother had got badly hurt at football. Of a boy called Carr, a magnificent half-back, whose calves were a beacon and a shining light to the entire school. Of West, the cricket captain, scoring a hundred in a big match against our great rivals Sedbergh, and getting no applause because the evening before he had caned the most popular boy in the school. Of the practice whereby some of the youngest boys, who lived at Bankwell, the preparatory house for kids, would take flowers up to the Hostel and offer them to their cricket and football heroes. Actually they gave them to the heroes' fags, which was the highest they dared look. The head master stopped this practice, saying that it was too Greek, which to us then was double-Dutch. Of a science-master called Watts, but whom all the other masters called K. G. This led us to suppose that there was a Garter in his family. When, years afterwards, I paid a visit to the old school I asked what K. G. had really stood for, and was told Kidney Grabber, owing to the science-master's reprehensible habit of coming down early to Sunday morning breakfast to grab all the kidneys. When my brother and I left Giggleswick for health reasons, we were put in quarantine in a sanatorium, outside whose walls the barrel-organs were playing "Mrs. Enry 'Awkins" and "The Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo".

Of Jubilees and Coronations. The 1887 Jubilee was the occasion of and excuse for the Manchester Exhibition. The only exhibit I remember was a dreadful, semi-religious painting by Edwin Long entitled "Diana or Christ". The exhibition was opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales, from whom, since my father was a guarantor, I was separated at the opening ceremony by less than a dozen feet. The

proceedings began with the singing of "O God, Our Help in Ages Past", of which it was proposed to give only one verse. The Princess of Wales, who was deaf, did not know this, and commenced a solo second verse. Whereupon her lord and master dug her in the ribs and I heard a guttural voice say with a pronounced German accent, "Shut up!"

I spent the Diamond Jubilee at Old Trafford watching cricket.

On the day of King Edward's Coronation my father took us all for a tramp over Kinderscout.

I spent most of King George's Coronation day sitting on a gate at Chapel-en-le-Frith listening to my landlord, George Potter, who started the conversational ball rolling by saying: "Coronations, Mister? Coronations is muck!" George, who was the groundsman of the local golf club and was generally covered with loam, was the finest gentleman I have ever met. I went with him to the funeral of his father and partook of cake and wine handed to the guests across the open coffin and saw the same refreshments put outside the cottage door to propitiate the birds. George was a great reader of Shakespeare, and at night, with his feet cocked on the mantelpiece and most of his toes coming through a pair of my socks, would discuss the finer points of that dramatist. One evening when his missus was laid up he brought the dinner into my room, set it down, and said with great gusto: "Uncover, dog, and lap!" He and his wife were very dear friends of mine and we hardly ever fell out, though there was one occasion when, having walked from the station in the pouring rain, I came into a house full of crying children and the steam of washing day, and opening the door of my room fell into a basket containing a new-born lamb whose mother had died in giving it birth. There was nothing in such circumstances for landlord and lodger to do except go over the way to the Hanging Gate, which we did. This happy couple's three children have done well in life, and it is a gratification to me to reflect that I once gave the Saturday night bath to, and soaped the back of, an august lady who is now Senior English mistress at a Girls' High School.

Of the first awakening of the critical faculty. A Miss Picker-

ing coming to call on my mother, I surveyed her and said, "I like you all but your boots." Of my extremely ancient Cousin Ann telling my mother, who was in some trouble, that she had better cry while she could, as very old people love the power of tears. Of driving in a wagonette and hearing my mother and some visitors discussing the ethics of *Esther Waters*. Of the coming into the house of the first copy of the *Strand Magazine*, of the stories of Mrs. L. T. Meade, and of the storming of consciousness by Sherlock Holmes, who at his first appearance was a real person having nothing to do with fiction. Conan Doyle might have protested till he was blue in the face about his character being imaginary; we should have known otherwise. Of a book called *The Silver Mill*, and how its atmosphere remains subtly intermingled with that of Beethoven's "Spring" sonata which my brother Gustave was practising. And then in retrograde our old nurse reads aloud stories whose titles are *A Peep Behind the Scenes*, *Lillian's Golden Hours*, *Edith Vernon's Life Work*, *Won by Gentleness*, *Queechy*. This was long before we had our own books. I must have been in my teens when my aunt promised to give me for my birthday a copy of *King Solomon's Mines*, for sale on Bakewell Station. The promise was made three weeks before the event, and every day I used to go up to the station to see if the book was still there.

Of Mrs. Bamford. This tremendous figure of my childhood was a combination of Boadicea, Queen Victoria and Mrs. Bayham Badger. She lived in a tiny house in a small street, and I perpetually wondered how so overpowering a personage could consent to so circumscribed a parlour. She invariably wore black satin, straining and creaking over a full bust. Her manner was extremely formidable and my mother went in awe of her, though my aunt, oddly enough, was on more intimate terms and on one occasion actually went there to tea. I never saw Mr. Bamford, though a large framed photograph suggested that in life he had been a sergeant-major. Mrs. Bamford made the dress worn by my mother in the picture of her given in this book, the date of which is round about 1882. I was present at the tryings-on, not

of this masterpiece but of the next, created for the Jubilee Exhibition of 1887, though of this, unfortunately, no photograph exists. But the dress is extant, and I recognised it when May wore it, or some of its parts, on the stage recently.

Of early days at Old Trafford. When I first watched Lancashire the mainstays of the team were Hornby, Barlow, Sugg, Briggs, Watson and Pilling, and I faintly remember A. G. Steel. I was present at the début of Albert Ward, one of the most tedious batsmen I ever set eyes on, and of J. T. Tyldesley, whose bat always seemed to be a size too big for him. I remember reading about A. C. MacLaren's first appearance as a schoolboy, and know the exact spot in our garden at which I heard of his record score of 424 against Somerset. My father had brought the evening paper home and I was sitting on a form getting by heart Burke's famous passage about a thousand swords leaping from their scabbards on behalf of Marie Antoinette.

Of being taken to see Toole, and thinking him extremely unfunny. But here is a good story about the old man, told me by the landlord of an hotel at Epsom where I was dining before a lecture. It was during Toole's last days at Brighton. A self-important personage, all paunch and watch-chain, seeing the old boy being wheeled along the front in a bath-chair, stopped him and said: "It's a privilege, sir, to enquire after your health. I saw you play Paul Pry once." Toole, who could hardly speak, motioned to the personage to lower his head, and then whispered: "I played it twice!" Asking whether the story was authentic, I received the reply: "I am Toole's nephew, and I was wheeling the bath-chair."

Of drives back from the theatres in the plush-lined yellow four-wheeler belonging to the Manchester Carriage Company. I used to be so tired that I would fall asleep between each lamp-post, whose glare would wake me up again. When we got home there seems in recollection, and whatever the time of the year, always to have been roast pheasant for supper,

prepared by old Jane. This gaunt Yorkshirewoman, whom we all idolised, had been my mother's nurse, and it was a thrilling moment for us children when one day she opened the door to a burly Petty Officer who flung his arms around her and called her mother. An odd thing happened to me about this time, which was that whenever I fell in love with an actress, which was fairly often, I could never remember her face. I could recall everybody else's features plainly but not hers, which was most annoying. The first time this happened was in connection with a young lady in Mrs. Kendal's company.

Of a dreadful moment when my first groom gave me away to Authority. Nobody was supposed to know that I was keeping a horse and gig. Both were extremely smart, the gig being a high yellow dog-cart and the horse a beautiful dark chestnut mare with four white socks. I had told the groom—a daft Derbyshire lout and son of the local butcher—to fetch me from the golf links, and instead he drove to the office in Manchester. Authority, coming down the office steps, asked whose was the turn-out. Nothing was said but much was doubtless thought, though it would have required blacker looks than Authority possessed to separate us.

Of driving from Chapel-en-le-Frith to Disley on Sunday evenings to dine and argue with Edgar Baerlein, who ought to have been Chief of Staff during the war. Edgar has the quickest and most exact brain I have ever known, and we would argue for hours as to whether a cloud has a silver lining or a silver cover. By this time I had become possessed of the smallest groom in Christendom. Little Joe Ford's way with animals was wonderful, and where other people would break a horse in he seemed only to mesmerise it. The day I engaged him was a Thursday, and though he had never been on the back of a horse in his life, on the Saturday afternoon of that week he rode First Edition, the highest stepping pony I ever owned and an abominable ride, at a show and took first prize. I am a hard task-master and I am afraid I gruelled him now and again. But he was never sick or sorry, and was

as cheerful as a sparrow in all weathers. All our bit of Derbyshire knew and liked him. He was killed in the War.

Of amateur photography, and how often I have half-asphyxiated myself in boot-cupboards turned into dark-rooms without ventilation. Of carrying a heavy camera, complete with tripod and plates, from Rosthwaite in Borrowdale to Seascale on the coast. I was seventeen, and as the walk included the summits of Great Gable and Scawfell Pike I was pretty well done up at the end of the day. To be fair, I had a friend with me, one Stanley Rigby, which meant halving the weight of the camera.

Of worshipping the name of Horsley Hinton, the great authority of *The Amateur Photographer*, who taught us to get atmosphere by means of cotton-wool. He also had formidable views about composition. Among the illustrations to this book will be found a picture for which I waited the whole of a morning and afternoon before I got a composition that pleased me. Forty years later I still think that this is pretty good ; the original print has now taken on what Henry James used to call "the tone of time". Needless to say, I did all my own developing, printing and mounting. To call for prints at the chemist's is not photography as I understand it, although I do not go so far as a dragonsome relative of my father, who asked me if I did it all myself. I made indignant affirmation, whereupon the old lady said coldly : "Yes, but did you make the plates?"

Of boxing matches. I know nothing about the science of boxing ; that which attracts me is that grim moment when nothing remains to a man except the will to hang on. This is a genuine emotion with me and not a Kipling-esque echo. I like to see two boxers make a "red ruin" of each other's faces, though I hate the same spectacle in the street. In the ring it is a guarantee that the men are trying, for there is no art by which blood may be faked. Or is there? Anyhow, the stuff looks genuine. Among the fights I best remember are the Carpentier-Gunboat Smith affair, Freddie Welsh's last battle, and the defeats of the handsome Bombardier, which

were as frequent and painful as the farewells of a prima donna. The greatest fight I ever witnessed was that between Beckett and Moran. The finest fighter, in my opinion, was Kid Lewis, and the greatest artist at the game the incomparable Jimmy Wilde. The photograph of him was taken in his early days, and the hands still show sign of the pit.

Of a kindness done to me by Sir John Martin-Harvey. I had journeyed to Hammersmith to see this last of the great romantics in *The Lyons Mail*, and going round in the interval confessed to a sore throat and a temperature. Jack said he would send me an infallible remedy, and next morning before eight o'clock his chauffeur had made the journey all the way from Sheen not only with the stuff to be inhaled but with the inhaler to do it with. We are all capable of good impulses ; to put them into effect is another matter. But the Martin-Harveys are an adorable pair, with hearts of gold not only for themselves but for the outside world. I happen to know of a great many of their kindnesses, which I feel sure they would not desire should be set down here. Once after I had been ill they took me to Frinton. I sat in the back of the car with Lady Martin-Harvey, while Jack sat next to the driver. When we got to some desolate place in the middle of Essex the car stopped and I heard this : " My dear Agate, do you mind sitting in front ? We are about to pass through the village where I proposed to my wife, and I should like to hold her hand."

Of Arnold Bennett lecturing me at a play for which I had arrived late, pleading over-work and saying it would kill me : " People do not die of too much work, but of badly organised work."

Of telling A. B. at some first night that Eddie Marsh liked the play. " Hang Eddie Marsh !" said A. B. " He's a miserable fellow. He enjoys everything !"

Of Mostyn Piggott, one of the last of the Bohemians and relic of the " Pitcher " and George R. Sims epoch. Coming away from a dinner at the O.P. Club, at which I had been in the chair, Mostyn said : " My dear boy, I see no reason



why you should not be as good an after-dinner speaker as I was. Only you will have to be half as long and twice as witty as you were to-night!" When he felt his end was coming Mostyn said to some brother Savages: "I'm going down to Ramsgate to die." And a flash of the old Mostyn broke out when he added: "And a damned good place to die in!" I think I was the last Savage to see Mostyn, for I called on him at the Yacht Club and found him sitting alone playing patience in a gloomy smoke-room with cockroaches scurrying over the floor. He gave me the impression of being sensible that he had been somebody and of regretting that he had not been somebody enough. A coming man in his forties, he had let life slip away in the easy successes of after-dinner speaking and club badinage. He had a great wit, often tinged with malice, and his best friends went in something like fear of this odd-looking person with the strawcoloured moustache and looking like a compound of Ally Sloper and George Moore. Here is an example of Mostyn at his quickest. A member brought into the club for lunch the author of twenty not too successful novels and said: "Mostyn, I want to introduce Mr. Mullet." Mostyn pulled his moustache and said: "The un-read Mullet, I presume?"

Of Sir Thomas Beecham coming up to me on the platform at St. Pancras with a book under his arm and saying: "Good morning, my dear fellow. I've just bought one of your books. It's called *Buzz* . . . I forget the rest of the title!"

Of Beverley Baxter lecturing the critics at the annual dinner of the Critics' Circle. He said that the discovery of a Hamlet greater than Irving's would not be "news", but that a Hamlet who got really wounded in the duel would be very good news indeed. Or even if his nose bled. Alluding to a well-known musical critic he said: "But perhaps I had better call him a music critic. I do not think he is musical!"

Of playing golf at Wimbledon Park with Harry Randall and Ben Davies. An odd trio!

Of playing golf, again at Wimbledon Park, in front of Davy Burnaby who drove into me and sent his caddy forward to say he did it on purpose. I sent word back that that was a dashed sight funnier than anything he had said in the revue the night before !

Of driving into a retired General on a course in Bucks and sending my caddy forward to apologise. Caddy came back saying the General didn't accept no apologies. He added : "'E's no call to grumble. 'E worn't 'it in the War."

Of Peter Page and myself sitting next to each other at a first night, Peter with a bedroom slipper and walking-stick due to gout, and me with the same owing to a heel poisoned at golf. We were both in agony. Remarking on our two sticks and slippers Peter said as the curtain went up : " Now make us laugh, you —s ! "

Of sitting at dinner next to Vesta Tilley after she had retired, and beginning to tell her how I remembered her singing " By the Sad Sea Waves " in that Manchester pantomime of long ago. Of how I suddenly stopped, realising that she did not want to hear and that I did not want to tell.

Of Edgar Jepson saying of a visit to an early film and in the thin, sour voice of Jane Austen's Mr. Bennet : " For some time my wife and I laboured under a misapprehension. What we had taken to be the antics of an anthropoid ape turned out to be incidents in the life of President Lincoln ! "

#### OF CERTAIN ANECDOTES :

The best impromptu utterance I ever heard was made by Jack Hassall at a dinner of the Titmarsh Club. The whole point is that this dinner took place on the evening of the day on which the Tutenkamen discoveries were first announced in the *Morning Post*. The secretary of this dining club was one Lewis Benjamin, an odd little person looking rather like an Assyrian goat, who lived by putting together lives of

Queens in Everything but Name and other historico-curious compilations. Hassall was in the middle of one of his enthralling speeches. The whole company was holding its breath so as not to break the thread of his variegated and highly-coloured discourse, when Benjamin got up and called the attention of the chair to the fact that the speaker had exceeded the time limit. Hassall drew himself up to his full height and pointing an awful finger at the absurd little man said : "Why don't they put that back in the tomb?"

The wittiest woman in London to-day is Lilian Braithwaite. Seeing her sitting alone at the Savoy grill one night I rushed in where angels, etc., etc. "My dear Lilian, I have long wanted to tell you that in my opinion you are the second most beautiful woman in London." If questioned I was prepared to award first place to a beauty of antique and challengeless fame. But Lilian was not curious, and the words were hardly out of my mouth before she said : "Thank you so much. I shall cherish that, coming from our second-best dramatic critic."

Eliza Aria, who used to contribute "Mrs. A.'s Diary" to *Truth*, possessed in her time as much wit as ever came out of any woman. At the theatre she always wore a head-dress which looked like a bonnet and appeared to be made out of the wings of enormous bees. After the first act of some dreadful show the head appeared over my right shoulder and a familiar voice said, all in one breath : "Dear Mr. Agate how are you liking the play I am sitting next to the author's mother?" Eliza was for many years a dear friend of Henry Irving, whose photograph, taken improbably on the golf links at Cromer, she gave me. At a luncheon-party that I assembled in Eliza's honour some little chit began to tell stories of Irving. Eliza listened for some time and then said : "Do go on, dear. You know, of course, that in all that concerns dear Henry I am supposed to be a past mistress!" This was the party at which Archy Rosenthal, the pianist, inveighing against reciters, gave it as his opinion that they should all be disembowelled. Whereat

Constance Collier sepulchrally boomed : " And to think that I have recited at the end of every pier in Europe ! " It was at Eliza's flat one day that I ventured to remark upon a hideous and gimcrack occasional-table of the mode of the eighteen-seventies and afterwards lacquered in accordance with the Japanese craze of the 'nineties. " That belonged to Marie Lloyd," said Eliza simply, and so turned my dispraise to ecstasy. Next day Carter Paterson's van stopped outside my Doughty Street chambers and the table was brought in with a card tied to its leg announcing that it was the bearer of Eliza's love. She was a dear and kind soul, with a brilliant tongue which she knew how to make magnificently tart. She died in the theatre as the curtain was about to go up on the first night of *Grand Hotel*, and I have often thought how much she would have liked to pretend that she died as the result of that piece.

Rebecca West has a brain of steel. I met her on the boat during a rough crossing to France. She was saying : " My dear Mr. Agate, you are entirely wrong. Aristotle lays it down that . . ." when the boat gave a lurch and we were separated. I ran into Rebecca again on the boat coming back, and she at once began : " As I was saying, Aristotle lays it down that . . ." She took the chair for me at the first lecture I ever gave. I must have been a terrible tyro, and anyhow the subject was the English novel, of which I was an immature critic. I had just got to the point in my lecture where my next note ran : " Later H. G. Wells not worth ha'p'orth cold gin," when I looked up and saw H. G.'s face in the front row ! A good general is one who knows when retreat is impossible, so I put a bold face on my difficulty by reading the note aloud. This tickled H. G. exceedingly. At a party some little time later Rebecca, who I think had been pleased when I called her " Trafalgar Square's Fifth Lion ", told me she was instructed to introduce me to Wells. I refused, saying that to meet a great man was always fatal and that I wanted to keep my illusions unimpaired. Rebecca took my message and came back saying, " H. G. insists. He wants to increase his." I

cannot think that any great man has ever paid a prettier compliment.

Perhaps I may tell the story of the Very Distinguished Guest who at one of my little suppers at Palace Court told us of a Difficult Situation in South Wales. She had been down to open a bazaar and they had given her luncheon. "Whatever the fish was, it was undoubtedly diseased, and I realised at once that if I swallowed it I must die of ptomaine poisoning, and that if I did anything else I should offend the amenities of the South Wales coal-fields." At that she stopped, and another of my guests made so bold as to ask what, actually, she had done. My Very Distinguished Guest drew herself up and with infinite hauteur replied : "We don't remember !" On the morning of that party my man, whose ingenuity and tact would normally have been capable of coping with the entire Royal family, had gone down with pleurisy. In view of the nature of my guests the reader will understand how I rang up restaurateurs, and how in answer to urgent telephone-calls kind ladies proffered their butlers. When I came back from that performance of *Bitter Sweet* to which I had escorted my Very Distinguished Guest, the door of the hired Daimler was opened by an unknown individual wearing white kid gloves, while total strangers relieved us of cloaks, coats and hats and ushered us into a beautifully-decorated room and a sumptuous supper. Everything went off without a hitch, and I was preening myself upon my staff work when the Very Distinguished Guest said : "Really, Mr. Agate, I had no idea that dramatic critics did themselves so well. Gunter's man, of course, I know. But *two* butlers !" At this Marie Tempest emitted a noise which was a compound of squawk and gurgle. But the whole evening was a great success.

Of two soldier stories for the truth of which I can vouch because they happened to me. I was demanding of my bâtmán in the South of France an explanation of his too frequent absences without leave. Then this conversation occurred :

BÂTMAN (*pointing*). See that 'ouse on the 'ill, guvner?

ME. Go on.

BÂTMAN. It belongs to a French orf'cer.

ME. Well?

BÂTMAN. He's at the front.

ME. What's that got to do with it?

BÂTMAN. His missus lives there. *I'm 'er maîtresse!*

It was Jenkins who accompanied me to the French Alps where, on the snow-line and with the assistance of some two hundred Indian troops, I had to store seven thousand tons of dates bought in Algiers and in the hot August sun looking like melting into sweet nothing. "*Talbot jouait Thérémène. Non, qui n'a pas vu Talbot dans Thérémène n'a rien vu,*" wrote Sarcey in the 'eighties. Similarly, I say that he who has not beheld seven thousand tons of liquefying dates has beheld nothing. One day with the thermometer round about 100° in the shade, Jenkins asked what I would like for dinner. Knowing him to be a scrounger of genius, I said: "The liver wing of a roast chicken and a suet pudding." The chicken duly appeared, and also the pudding. Presently I noticed that Jenkins, who combined the duties of bâtman, cook and mess waiter, was sweating profusely. Holding that military discipline may relax when there is only one officer and one other rank, I told Jenkins he could take his tunic off. "It's against the rules, sir," said the fellow, not normally punctilious. "Rules be blowed," I said, "take it off." "That's h'impossible, sir," he persisted, "Ain't got no shirt on." I said: "Why, Jenkins, have you no shirt on?" He replied: "Beg pardon, sir, but I used it to boil the pudding!"

Once I had a day's golf at Keswick, on a course where it was impossible to get any lunch. After two exhausting, foodless rounds, even a modicum of whisky will go to the head, and my modicum did. Getting into the train for Windermere I threw my clubs on to the rack of a third-class carriage, which prompted an old man sitting in the far corner to say: "What be they for, Mestur?" Being slightly tight I said: "Otter spearing." He said: "Man, ye look sane enough but ye're

a puir bloody fool." He got out at the next station, and a farmer sitting opposite me said : " Do ye know who that wur, Mestur ? That wur Lord U——'s otter huntsman ! "

Another story against me relates to a day when I lectured at the London School of Economics. There are two theatres in this building, where two lecturers talk at the same hour. This was in my early days, and thinking I had done rather well I mingled with the crowd leaving the hall in order to get the general opinion. Hearing one girl student say to her friend : " I wish we had gone to the other lecture," I went to the notice board to see what had been my rival's subject. He had talked on " Alternative Systems of Accountancy on Chinese Railways ".

The first time I met Douglas Furber was in the card-room at the Savage Club, where I cut him for a partner. Somebody, seeing that we were not acquainted, said : " Furber, do you know Agate ? " Furber, who had not picked up his hand, said : " Yes. E's the bloke wot didn't like my last revue. Five no-trumps ! "

One of my best inventions is that I played bridge with Tom Shaw the day he was made Minister for War, and pointed out to him that he was guilty of a grave dereliction from duty. " Suppose war were to break out ? " Tom, with that phlegm which is one of his many lovable qualities, is supposed to have answered : " There'll be no bother, lad, while I'm in office. *I shan't be ready !* "

#### OF STAGE UTTERANCES THAT I REMEMBER :

It would be easy to make a list which would do credit to one's literary sense. But the point is to tell the truth, even if the lines which come to me unbidden are not necessarily great lines, though some may be. In no particular order, then, I remember :

Benson in *Coriolanus* saying : " There is a world elsewhere." I was fourteen and it was at the Theatre Royal, Manchester.



*Malbran*  
*From a drawing by Grovedon*





I burst into tears and laid my head down on the wooden partition separating pit from stalls.

Irene Vanbrugh in *His House in Order* saying : " I go to no park to-morrow." Later, I took my landlord, George Potter, to see a performance of this play in Buxton. When the provincial actress got to this line George brought his enormous fist down on to the brass rail separating the orchestra from the stalls and shouted : " And I'd go to no bloody park, noather, Miss ! "

Lewis Waller's " Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more ", pitched in the key of a silver trumpet. Your modern Henry intones " Once moah unto the breach, deah friends, once moah " in the manner of a curate urging his flock to a silver collection.

Mrs. Kendal sitting on the lid of an oak chest containing her lover, drumming her heels and bidding her husband " R-r-run like the swift hare ".

Louis Calvert in *Antony and Cleopatra* saying to the attendant announcing news from Rome : " Grates me : the sum." This is my reply to Jock whenever he comes to tell me with a long face that the household bills are mounting up.

Janet Achurch in *A Doll's House* saying to Doctor Rank : " Let me pass, please." Janet used to drop her voice a full third on the word " pass ". The last fool I saw play Nora not only did this bit skittishly but contrived to get herself seated on the wrong side of the doctor, so that she did not have to pass him at all !

Hilda Trevelyan in *What Every Woman Knows* bringing the curtain down on the cry : " My constituents ! "

Edward Terry in *Sweet Lavender* saying : " Have you seen my dress-suit, Clemmy, my boy ? The coat and waistcoat are in fair preservation, but the rest of it has been attending funerals for years." With enormous emphasis on " funerals "

(high note) and "years" (low note). Unlike any other comedian I have ever seen, Terry declined to let his laughs have their full value ; when the audience was three-quarters way through a laugh Terry would decide that that was enough, and the great voice would again come booming through. The present generation knows nothing about this exquisite comedian, and when you mention him gazes at you in a wild surmise, pop-eyed like pekes in Darien. No young person reading this book will have the faintest notion of the allusion buried here. I do not object to the younger generation not knowing anything about anything except the internal-combustion engine ; I am ashamed of its not being ashamed of its colossal ignorance.

#### OF STAGE-PICTURES THAT RECUR :

Irving in *The Bells* brushing the snow from his boots. Irving's look when Dante sees Ugolino starving in his tower. Irving's gusto when in *The Lyons Mail* Dubosc, with a face like a dirty hatchet, goes through the pockets of the dead postilion. The same mask, now sunset-gilded, which Lesurques turns on his accusers.

Ellen Terry at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, playing *Alice Sit-By-The-Fire* on the night after Irving died. Just before the end Alice has to say : "It's summer done, autumn begun. Farewell, summer. Alice Sit-by-the-fire henceforth. The moon is full to-night, Robert, but it isn't looking for me any more. Taxis farewell—advance four-wheelers. I had a beautiful husband once, black as the raven was his hair——" Here Ellen broke down utterly. The curtain fell in silence, and we all left the theatre quietly, feeling that we had intruded on a private sorrow.

Benson's entry in *King Lear* with the body of Cordelia in his arms. Benson's gnarled walk across the stage as Hamlet. Benson as Caliban hanging head downwards from a palm-tree.

Forbes-Robertson in *The Light That Failed* making me cry so much that the whole scene was blotted out. (Jean Forbes-

Robertson with Lawrence Anderson did the same thing in *Berkeley Square*, and again in the revival with Leslie Howard.) No need perhaps to say that the photograph given in this book shows this great actor—for there is greatness in serenity as in turbulence—as Hamlet, of which character he played four-fifths to absolute perfection. I always wanted him to play Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*, if only to give form and moving to “that noble countenance, Wherein the worship of the whole world lies.”

If I were to start upon stage death-scenes there would be no end to this chapter. Mr. Graham Robertson, in his delightful book *Time Was*, has this passage: “I saw Sarah rehearse *La Dame aux Camélias*, and was most interested to note the absolute precision with which she built up her apparently spontaneous effects. There was a new Armand Duval, and over and over again they practised the wonderful death-fall in the last act when the body of Marguerite used to drop from his arms with no more weight than a snowflake or a feather. ‘I know I shall break my neck over that some day,’ observed Sarah cheerfully. ‘If Armand does not keep tight hold of my hand as I swing round I’m done for.’ But the thought did not depress her, and the new Armand held tight as requested and acquitted himself well throughout.” I once saw Marguerite die differently. It was at Ealing in 1908, or whatever the year was in which Sarah gave a number of performances in suburban, outlying theatres, but did not appear in the West-End. This was the greatest performance in this part that I ever saw her give. The end found Marguerite sitting on the couch, which was parallel with the footlights, with Armand kneeling in front of her. “*Mais je vais vivre ! Ah ! que je me sens bien !*” She leaned forward with her face buried in Armand’s shoulder, and the tousled, auburn mop just showing. Then the handkerchief fell from her hand. I never saw her die like that again.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LAST WORDS ON SARAH

“IT was on my eleventh birthday that I first saw Sarah Bernhardt. I remember how small yet how important I felt as I jostled the grown-ups in the pit queue. I remember the exact shape and colour of the sunset on that hot September evening, how it changed from blood-red to mauve, and a single star came out. I remember that the poster on the theatre wall showed a delicate lady in a dress of the same mauve posing wistfully against a background of white camellias and silver stars. I remember the long wait in the dingy theatre, the growing tension, the blood which seemed to bubble in my temples, the fever-heat of expectancy. And then Sarah came. At once, by her mere aspect, she opened the door to a world hitherto unknown. Consider that up till then all that I knew was Manchester, its mean, bowler-hatted men of business and their dolman-swathed, grotesquely-bonneted wives. Here was a creature half sylph, half rainbow. I believe that I cried “Oh!” and I know that I waited for her to speak in a state not far removed from anguish. The applause stopped. Marguerite had begun that first scene with Varville, and I knew that just as my eyes had never before beheld vision so strangely troubling, so my ears were drinking in sounds the like of which I had never heard. It is a little difficult to disentangle what I thought then from what I have thought since. I can only say that when, later, I was to listen to the ache in Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde*, or to marvel before the glory of Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*—I can only say that these experiences had all been forestalled. Her acting on that evening unveiled for me the ecstasy of the body and the torture of the mind. My small world had not up till then held cause for pity like this poor lady. For days after I was unhappy, not because of Marguerite,

but because the play was over, and the world had become empty.

"It was many years later that I came to know Sarah. She had lived down old legends then. Emperors, they once said, waited upon her, and Popes failed of an audience. Her chariot was horsed by captive kings. She loosed none too tame cheetahs upon unwelcome visitors. . . . Of all this I saw nothing. The actress whom I knew was an old lady of infinite dignity. I used to watch her give lessons on the stage of her Paris theatre to pupils who were either artists of repute or humble students. Those who had no capacity were dismissed with a gracious smile ; upon such as showed a vestige of talent Sarah would bestow first a scolding and then an infinity of pains. To the younger pupils she was a veritable Mother Superior, and often the theatre took on the aspect of a convent. She played so many Empresses and Queens that towards the end of her life she would throw remarks over her shoulder, addressed to a Court that was not there. I remember Sarah, on her seventieth birthday, sitting by the fire in my mother's drawing-room, telling stories and in manner and spirit as young and fresh and radiant as a girl of twenty. I remember her now as she left, gathering round her that mantle of misty grey and filling the October garden with a seabird's splendour. I remember the look of affection which she threw to my mother as the carriage rolled away. I remember how we gazed after it, and that presently from the window, a bunch of flowers was waved."

When, the day after Sarah died, I wrote the foregoing I confess I thought it a goodish piece of work. I chose it for the first place in my next book of essays and was hurt when a reviewer in the *Manchester Guardian* said : "One thinks one is a little tired of Mr. Agate on Bernhardt." I shall not risk that snub again, and will let my sister speak for me. May knew her intimately. I asked if she could give me something for this book, and this is what she replied :

EGO

206 Elms Road,  
Clapham Park, S.W.4.  
17th July, 1934.

MY DEAR JIMMIE,

My "Recollections of Sarah" would take *times*. I have had in mind for some time a little book of memories of her which when I am an old lady keeping a Berlin wool shop in Dorking may get set down. But in the meantime and in case it should never get done I should like to say something like this.

No one, so far as I know, has ever said how *in advance of her time* she was. Her flamboyance has been stressed so much that it has taken on the complexion of spuriousness in minds that never knew hers. Even people who saw her remember the glamour to the belittlement of her intellect. Now, her personal magnetism was no flashy, calculated effect. You can't blame the sun for shining. She loathed pretentiousness and was regal simply because she couldn't help it. And so she took Queens and Empresses in her stride. But they never ceased to be human beings at their simplest in their emotions. Indeed, the words most often on her lips were, "*la pensée*", "*le naturel*", "*la sincérité*", and "*dire juste*"—and these are the simple rules which are with me every time I study a part. Truth was the whole secret of her greatness. There was nothing bogus about her—no intellectual vapourings or complicated theories, no pose. I never heard her use the word psychology, though God knows she knew more about it than anybody before or since. "*Je n'ai jamais été à la guerre, mais je sais que c'est comme ça*" was what she said (before 1914), having given the most blood-curdling, hair-raising, unbearable performance of the battle-field scene in *L'Aiglon*. "Simplicity always and no tricks"—that is what I remember of her teaching. And, come to think of it, if we try to forget the glamour—which we threw over her as much as she unconsciously hypnotised us—and think of her greatest moments, they *were* immensely simple and uncalculated. I can remember no single instant which was not basically true, pure human feeling and perfectly sincere. She was the first person to dare to preach naturalness in the French theatre (*theatre size*, of course) and to discard tradition. The Conservatoire and the Comédie are using to-day methods she threw over-

board half a century ago. Incidentally, the ultra-modern school has robbed verse of all its rhythm and beauty in the last few years, and I don't know which is worse—the "style déclamatoire" or the prose larded with the "refained" vowels of the "accent de faubourg" one hears to-day!

But to return to Madame Sarah. "La tradition" was her "bête-noire", and if it is held up against her that she stuck to the old school of play-writing it must be remembered that she made her contribution and said her say long before the modern school of drama came into vogue, and had gone as far as she need. She discarded the old declamatory style "dès son début" and, creating a school for herself, fulfilled her mission which was to bring both the classics and the melodrama of her day to life. You may think all this encroaches on the critic's prerogative, but my outstanding memory of her lessons is of one long outcry against the old school of acting. Think of her immediate predecessors, with the exception of Rachel—and I have my doubts about her from all accounts! Their barn-storming and arm-waving must have been grotesque, but nobody saw it until Sarah came along and said: "Mais cela ne veut rien dire!" The proof is that they are still at it, and not only in the remoter provinces.

A word about her voice. Why "golden"? You know it wasn't. It was much more silvery, "moon-lit", and came like a shaft of chilling light or a cool breeze upon the rather turgid sea of French nasality—if golden, then very pale gold.

You can quote, if you like, a phrase she once wrote to me. Just after I left her I complained to her that "cheapness" seemed in demand, cheap laughs, etc., and she replied: "Soyez le plus naturel possible; ne soyez jamais vulgaire. Regardez souvent votre Maman qui est la distinction même. . . ." By which she meant: "Don't be vulgar when the part isn't." Vulgarity of mind "la répugnait", though she would have been all for playing character realistically. Even so it must be a qualified realism, for doesn't she say in her book: "Il est inutile d'être naturel avec brutalité"?

Garcia said she was magnificent in *Les Mauvais Bergers*, in which she played a factory girl—a fine play of Galsworthian dimensions, so you see she did *try* the new stuff.



I saw her play Dorine in *Tartuffe* more like *all* "servantes" than any other French actress could be like *one* !

It is nice of you to want to say kind things about my work. Let it be no more than it deserves. Sarah used to say : "Vous jouerez la comédie avec votre petit nez," but wished I could grow two inches and be thin, for she saw in me qualities for a "jeune première"—plus jeune hélas à l'heure qu'il est ! She said I had laughter and tears, even in those early days. Well, circumstances made me develop a comic quality and I suppose the British Music Hall will out ! After all, a Harlequin in one's ancestry tells.

If you want the story of your introduction to Sarah at the Cours, I can quote her exact words about me to you. They were very complimentary and you replied that you could not believe such praise from her to be possible. To which she indignantly responded : "Mais il faut le croire. C'est moi qui vous le dis." Do you remember ?

This is the extract from my diary :

14.2.12—Conversation avec Jimmie :—

S. B. Votre petite sœur a d'énormes dispositions pour le théâtre.

J. A. Vous croyez, Madame, qu'elle peut faire une carrière ?

S. B. Mais je pense bien ! Une tres belle carrière même. Elle arrivera parce qu'elle est sérieuse, qu'elle travaille et qu'elle a le vrai sentiment. Je vous en donne ma parole d'honneur !

I think perhaps I had better tell you the facts of my first interview with Madame Sarah. Mamma and I saw her by appointment at the Hotel Metropole, Brighton, in the autumn of 1911. We had previously been granted a few minutes in her dressing-room at the Coliseum the week before, upon a letter of introduction from old friends of hers.

This time we were shewn up to her private sitting-room, where she was rehearsing, I think *Lucrece Borgia*. She stopped the rehearsal when we were announced, and Lou Tellegen and the rest of the company retired out of earshot to examine a model of the scene in process of rehearsal. Madame Sarah remained on the divan amid a heap of cushions and asked me to recite. I stood up, towering as it seemed, above her ! To this day I do not know how she looked or what she wore. I only realised I was in the presence of the greatest person-

## LAST WORDS ON SARAH

ality it was possible for me to imagine. Carefully primed by Mamma to "make no fuss but to recite if told to", I began. No West-End first-night can be quite so terrifying.

Remembering that at her audition at the Conservatoire Sarah herself had said a La Fontaine fable ("Les Deux Pigeons"), I had made up my mind not to attempt anything more ambitious, and had chosen "Les Animaux malades de la Peste".

Un mal qui répand la terreur,  
Mal que le Ciel en sa fureur  
Inventa pour punir les crimes de la terre,  
La Peste (puisqu'il faut l'appeler par son nom)  
Capable d'enrichir en un jour l'Achéron,  
Faisait aux animaux la guerre.

I declaimed these first six lines in the manner I had been taught by my French governess, the manner which I knew later to be abhorred by Madame Sarah. "Full of sound and fury" I was! But I sensed she wasn't gripped and thought subconsciously, "This won't do, she's *bored*, I *must* make her look at me." Then I had an inspiration, continuing—

Ils ne mouraient pas tous, mais tous étaient frappés . . .

and reaching the line—

Les tourterelles se fuyaient

I gave my best imitation of Sarah herself. I tried to make "tourterelles" coo like doves and to spread out "fuyaient" to give the idea of separation by an enormous distance, with the best sob I could muster. The rest was plain sailing, for, as soon as I forgot my governess and everything I had been taught by her, Madame Sarah looked up, ceased fingering the flowers we had brought her, and made a sign to her Company to pay attention too. . . . She heard me through to the end, another fifty lines, and I knew she would say: "Let the child study for the stage." But I did not suspect she would add "with me".

The moment will remain the greatest of my theatrical life.

Je t'embrasse  
Ta sœur qui t'aime.

MAYKINS.

I could not allow all that about "naturalness" and "psychological mastery" to pass entirely unchallenged, and the result

was a meeting over a heated cold lunch. Next day May wrote a second letter. But first I must explain about "Wilfrid" and "Lorenzaccio", or this letter will not be intelligible. Wilfrid Grantham is May's husband. *Lorenzaccio* is de Musset's play used by "Grant Yates" as the basis of *Night's Candles* produced at the Shilling Theatre, Fulham, on the 4th June, 1933, with Ernest Milton in the title-rôle. "Grant Yates" is May and Wilfrid, who concealed their authorship of this play for fear I should have a fit of inverted honesty and go out of my way to attack it. Actually I wrote an enthusiastic column in the *Sunday Times* about it. I saw my sister and her husband in a box on the first night, but still my suspicions were not aroused. May lives more or less near there, I thought she had come to see Ernest in one of Sarah's old parts, and anyhow a box at a Shilling Theatre was probably not beyond Wilfrid's pocket. And I knew May was ready to sacrifice her husband's winter overcoat or summer holiday to do honour to Sarah. Even when the play came to the West-End in the following September I was still not in the secret and begged George Bishop to write the second notice and so relieve me of the boredom of saying the same thing twice. Here is May's second letter :

21st July, 1934.

MY DEAR JIMKINS,

I have been thinking a lot about our argument and still hold that if Sarah had been untrue to nature she could not have moved the world. No artist is really great without "the common touch". I never said Sarah was of the naturalistic school of common-place realism. I am not the only person who has used the word natural in relation to her. Here are Chapter and Verse :

Whereas most Hamlets seem isolated from the rest of the players as if they were something apart from the play, and speaking to the audience, this Hamlet spoke to other persons of the play, shared their life. . . . The performance was *natural*, easy, life-like and princely. The brutality of

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough  
was made plausible by Hamlet catching sight of the King  
and Polonius in the arras—a piece of business recom-

mended, I think, by Coleridge ; and I believe that a Shakespearean critic now says that there was a definite stage direction to that effect which is missing. The *naturalness* and progression of this scene as played by Sarah were a marvel. (Maurice Baring.)

Sans procédés, sans déblayage, sans excès, sans cris, elle nous a émus par la simplicité et la justesse de sa diction. (J. de Fillet, *Revue Bleue*, 1896.)

You'll say that this is not nearly enough to convince you. I'll quote you yards more when I've got time.

About being fanatical. I wish you could have heard me and Wilfrid arguing through the bath-room door one morning as to whether in *Lorenzaccio* we should follow de Musset or Sarah. I was not fanatical then, I can assure you ! If anything you are the sentimentalist because you insist on perpetuating the legendary Sarah and don't seem able to think of her work dispassionately. I suppose knowing her intimately, as I did, would divest her personality of some of the glamour. She once sent me to rehearse for her, saying, " Elle sait ce que je fais ", so I *do* know something of her mental processes—and incidentally my own ! Critics and actors speak a different language, it seems. I absolutely agree with Bergner about instinct. The critic theorises about our mental processes and says, " It must be so because it looks like it ", adding *his* capacity for reception and perception and calling it *the artist's* work. I am wandering horribly. To get back to Sarah. You mustn't tell me, who am steeped in French verse and French theatre, that she was " déclamatoire "—but perhaps all French verse-speaking is " déclamatoire " to you and you don't detect the difference between rhythmic speech and " déclamation ". Or again, perhaps you don't know the fine shade of meaning attached to the word in French ? Our friend X declames—il " débite " (hands it out), but the little fat woman who runs the " Quinze " not—elle *dit le vers* comme Sarah. You must admit you haven't studied syllabic, as opposed to metrical, verse as I have. I would never presume to dictate about blank-verse and what constitutes declaiming in English. Wilfrid takes it to begin when thought and sense stop, and that is the French meaning used technically.

I grant you the sublimating. But can't you have such a

thing as sublimation based on truth and nature? Sarah gave you the kernel without the husk. It all depends on how much you demand that acting should be narrowed down to portraiture of the photographic variety. Surely we know that all acting is mental? Her art seemed to me to be like modern painting or sculpture—she eliminated externals to give you purer thought—a process of simplification.

She was a magnificent mimic (I am corroborated by Baring), the first essential for character acting, and I still contend that had she turned her attention to it she could have excelled in that line. To deny it seems to me to be like saying Kreisler couldn't make something of "Three Blind Mice". But people of her magnitude *are* bigger than life-size, *ils jouent l'humanité*, and need not niggle to get into *one* skin like me! When I said "psychology", I meant all that an actor need know about the mind and emotions of the character in hand—not text-book stuff.

You may correct my spelling and grammar!!

Much love,

MAY.

And now, on the subject of Sarah, I am sworn to an Iago-like silence. "From this time forth I never will speak word."

BOOK II

I LIE ON IT



1932

June 2. To-day is the day on which my review of Arnold Bennett's *Journals* ought to have appeared in the *Express*. Kept out because of lists of winners in Irish Sweep for the Derby. Had considerable difficulty in getting consent to this review, on the theory that A. B. is no longer news. Am told that Beverley Baxter said to his staff four days after A. B.'s funeral: "Gentlemen, please understand that so far as the 'D.E.' is concerned Arnold Bennett is dead." The worst of it is that B. B. was right and in his place I should have had to do the same. But it hurts! It is A. B.'s diaries which have prompted this one, started by the writer in the fifty-fifth year of his age, which sounds like something on a tombstone! Am hoping this book will help to rid me of those *idées noires* with which I am too much obsessed.

But debt worries are legitimate hell. Have begun retrenching. Vacated the cottage at Beaconsfield and put up a "To Let" board; moved to a smaller flat at £140 instead of £250 which was the rent at Palace Court; got rid of the chauffeur and now make Alfred Lester drive as well as valet. This is not his real name, but fits this six foot four of melancholy fine. His previous place was ducal, which accounts for him saying to me on his second day: "We have been looking through our suits, sir, and find we need two more." Upon my promising to consider the matter he said: "They are ordered, sir. I dress my gentlemen according to their age and shape! You will approve the patterns, sir, I feel sure."

Of course, retrenching has its difficulties. I am faced with a big bill at Palace Court, having broken what now turns out to be a repairing lease. Getting in to the new place has cost £100. It is all very well selling my lovely chairs and table, but I have had to buy something smaller to take their place.



Also, absurd business with car. Back-axle of car dropped out on Blubberhouses Moor, Yorks., about three weeks ago—on Whit-Sunday, to be accurate. Had to be towed to Harrogate. Value of car estimated at £48. Harrogate repairer told me to sell at once, as car was shaping for a general break-up. Henley's offered £85 if I bought a Razzle Dazzle which, on their floor, I rather liked the look of. They wanted £240, or £155 plus my old bus. Agreed, and took out the R.D., registered, next day. Had not driven it a quarter of a mile before I knew it wouldn't do. Sunshine roof beastly and no room, chauffeur's arm and elbow jog and rub against mine every time he changes gear. Exactly like riding in a sardine-tin. Henley's very decent and would only charge me £10 for making the damned thing second-hand. So bought a Riley 9. drop-head coupé, done 3,000 miles, lovely condition, for £285, less £85 for old car plus £10 for swop, making £210 plus £20 interest spread out over 20 months.

Why must I have a car? If I don't I should never have any golf, or week-ends, which means *no* exercise, *no* fresh air and *no* change of scene. And we know where that leads! Besides, I work every day and all day from ten in the morning till two next morning, without relaxation and almost without meals. Perhaps sitting in the theatre at dull plays is the hardest work of all. In my agonies of boredom I could sometimes scream aloud! No *moral* justification for having a car, except that I *think* I give pleasure to a good many readers one way or another, and am entitled to have a bit myself, surely? Jock says I am the perfect Harold Skimpole. Perhaps. Anyhow, have economised by refusing Alfred Lester a new cap!

*June 3.* Question. Why am I keeping this diary? Answer.

Because it is part of the insane desire to perpetuate oneself. Because there seem to be lots of things I want to say that other writers put into novels and accepted essayists into essays. Because it will be a relief to set down just what I do actually think, and in the first words to hand, instead of pondering what I *ought* to think and worrying about the words in which to express the hammered-out thought. But I cannot and never could invent a story, or be bothered to

tell it, and have already published *five* books of essays, not having to do with the theatre, that have been complete and utter failures. So I am driven to this last ditch of expression.

Lunched to-day at the Ivy. Took Clarke-Smith there, who has discovered a dicky heart and needs cheering up. Afterwards joined a party headed by Leadlay, Cochran's publicity agent. He has a genius for tolerating fools which makes him invaluable to C. B. I like him. Also a hock-producer from Germany whose wine we drank, some people I didn't know and the editor of the *News Chronicle*, called Tom Clarke. Either this man was pulling my leg or he has the most cynical mentality in Fleet Street, since he pretended to believe in nothing except the lowest taste of the greatest number. Clarke denied having heard of Charles Morgan, and was loud in praise of Swaffer, who is of course a magnificent journalist and master of gossip. The fact that Clarke wanted me to include Swaffer in my Anthology, *The English Dramatic Critics*, made me realise that his attitude to Fleet Street was a pose. So I kept my temper, but with difficulty. Clarke-Smith complimented me on this feat after lunch, which ended at 4.40.

Went round to Pass and Joyce to see if I should swop the Riley for an open two-seater Talbot 18 h.p. shop-soiled at £425. List price £525. Fortunately the steering does not suit Alfred Lester, who is six foot four and whose knees get in the way. P. and J. say they can alter the steering, but Alfred Lester shakes his head and says *No!* Outside the shop he says the Talbot is *grand*, that the seating and steering-wheel could be altered, but that I can't afford it. Decide to try out the Riley on a trip to Yorkshire. Will start to-morrow night if it can get work done.

Leaving P. and J. meet Osbert Sitwell, who asked me to drink barley-water with him at his club next door. It is opposite Marlborough House, and I am too much of a snob to confess I don't know what club I am being taken to.

Sacheverell Sitwell has written a book about Mozart in which he said silly things about Wagner. Ernest Newman ripped the bowels out of S., who wrote of Wagner's "vulgar,

tweed-clad tunes". Osbert tried to defend his brother, and I had not the courage of my true conviction, which is that both brothers are artists who enjoy pretending to be asses. Osbert talked all the time and I never got a word in edgeways. I don't dislike him, though I understand why some people may. There is something self-satisfied and having-to-do-with-the-Bourbons about him which is annoying, though there is also something of the crowned-head consciousness which is disarming. His sister can be the handsomest woman in London. A good poet. Why is "poetess" suggestive of feminine foolishness? Surely a woman is a poet or nothing? Does one call Ethel Smythe a composereess?

*June 4.* Found I could get away last night. Took my godson Tony Baerlein with us. Wish I could drive a car, but too late to learn now. Have no nerve for it in any case. So Alfred Lester must go everywhere.

On my quoting Tennyson, Tony said: "Yes, he *does* rhyme, doesn't he!" Something between contempt and compassion.

What a crew these Bright Young Things are! Overheard at Boulestin's the other day. Young highbrow male: "The reason Czecho-Slovaks have no body-urge is that their insteps are insufficiently arched!" Young highbrow female: "Oh, my dear, don't you think arches are terribly unimportant?"

The slums of Nottingham are worse than any I have ever seen, including Collyhurst, which is a part of Manchester, although these latter, when I inspected them, had the advantage of a heat-wave in August and a tanner's yard and tallow factory in full blast. The Nottingham houses haven't a window whole, and look plague-swept and crazy and sinister, like a Caligari film or Vlamminck picture.

Put up at an expensive, gloomy hotel where there is abundance of bad sporting prints and bad sporting waiters who, when they drop a roll or a knife, pass it to one another with their feet like a football. Good cooking, though, and an excellent Château des Lauriers at 6/- a bottle. Cost for 3 moderate rooms (mine fairly good), dinner, wine and break-

fast—and one of us was a chauffeur—with tips came to £3, which I think is dear.

I see that E. V. Lucas has been made a Companion of Honour. No use to me! I want a knighthood, not because I should be the first dramatic critic to have one, but to prove to the good folk of Manchester that I am not a failure. Indeed, I promise His Majesty, if he will give me one, not to use the title south of the Trent! Honours list, as usual, wildly disappointing. But Monty Shearman points out that not *réclame* nor money nor anything else except an honour of sorts can come to one who has been Town Clerk of say Middlesbrough for forty years. *A fortiori*, I suppose, magistrates in Poona and sewage-inspectors in Kenya. But I still think it should be Sir Ernest Newman and then Sir Desmond MacCarthy and then Sir James Agate, if only for the fact that up to this date I have broadcast oftener than anybody else except the announcers.

Cannot understand why motoring depresses me. I think it is the open face of Nature and the dread of being left alone with a ploughed field and the naked sky. Is it that I don't like being left alone with my conscience? Or is it just the natural reaction from the exciting, unimportant life of cities to the immensely important, wholly dull business of things growing? Going back to this matter of conscience. Either the dead haven't any or they are all conscience. The latter would seem to postulate an eternity of remorse and not being able to do anything about it. Well, I just don't believe this. I can, at a pinch, believe in an eternity flowing with milk and honey, but not in one flowing with spilled milk and tears. In the end one or both would dry up. How this Hebraic imagery sticks! "A land swarming with cows and bees" would not have lasted. I suppose the Jews, not being agriculturalists, would not know where the milk and honey came from, and being Jews would accept them without asking.

Dropped Tony at Doncaster because he had to return to town, and came on to Scarborough. Lunched at Selby, and saw on the hotel notice-board a telegram from Bertram Mills beginning, "Your courtesy is requested in displaying this telegram on your notice-board informing your patrons that

the Bertram Mills' circus opens at York, etc., etc." Pitiless weather at Scarborough—bright sun and an icy cutting wind. "A Cold June", like that play which Nancy Price ought never to have let Pinero produce, though nobody could have stopped him writing it. Distinguished old men should be protected from themselves.

Queen's Hotel good and fairly cheap, being on the North side. Dinner 5/6, which is the most anybody ought to pay. At dinner drank a Gevrey-Chambertin at 4/6 a half-bott. Not worth it. Waited on by a "body" exactly like Muriel Aked, and nearly as good an actress. I asked this Muriel Aked how many bedrooms the hotel boasted, and she snuffled: "About a hundred. I haven't any idea really. That's just my idea!"

Motored round Filey which is dull, and Whitby which I like better. Was shown an antique shop made out of part of a castle in which King Richard III slept. Believed that a little, and was then shown some antiques.

Called at the Pavilion Hotel to see the relatives of Charles Laughton. Introduced myself, but could only unearth a younger brother, I think called Tom. A better-looking edition of Charles, with the same expressive mouth. Very modest and pleasant. Asked me to dine, but I hope I know when I am a nuisance, and so declined.

Went up to the castle and on the way there saw a little notice let into the wall. It read: "Behind this wall lies the grave of Anne Brontë." I looked over, and stayed looking for full five minutes. The lettering on the headstone was still perfectly clear. A sheep was kneeling on the grave cropping the grass. Two more were having a bit of a fight a few yards away. Lovely view over the bay, and I was not depressed.

Read Francis Iles's *Before the Fact* till 11.50, when I went to bed. Rather exciting to come across one's own name in a book, which has happened to me twice before—once in a novel by Dorothy Richardson, and once in a book by Grant Richards, whom I saw the other night in the theatre, still a beau, though the air of the 'nineties now wears a bit thin. But he was a fine figure once, and it was his eyeglass which made

me publish *Responsibility* with him. I don't think that novel of mine was altogether bad.

It is 34 years since I was in Scarborough, where I spent a week's holiday during my first year of business. The entertainments then offered the D'Oyly Carte Co. in Gilbert and Sullivan—it was my first hearing of *The Yeomen*—and Arthur Roberts. To-night they offer an actress I don't know in a play I have never heard of, or more probably forgotten—*The Way Things Happen*—and Greta Garbo in *The Rise of Helga*.

The town is full to-night of young Yorkshiremen in dinner-jackets and all with collars too low at the back, about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. rising to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. in front—the kind worn by third-rate dramatic critics.

Car went all right all day, low petrol consumption, but not quite enough power on the hills. Excellent for 9 h.p. though, and not a shadow of a complaint.

*June 5.* Woke up fresh, and discovered blue blinds in bedroom semi-pierced with holes, giving the effect of star-light in a theatre-scene. Very pretty, was quite happy, and free from nerves till an hour after lunch. Can it be smoking? Only a modicum of drink, no work and no worry for three days, or nights—which is more important.

Have discovered another reason why I am writing this book. Presumably the desire to read me will have faded before my itch to write has given out. Say I am 65 and the public is tired of J. A. and wishes him to shut up? But I may not want whatever little gift I have, or have had, to “fust in me unused” as Hamlet said. So I am getting my ground ready, preparing my retreat, like the far-seeing lady with the clasp-knives. I shall still have a diary to keep up.

Nothing remarkable to-day except a bad article by me in the *Sunday Times* about Léon Moussinac's book of scenery, which I very much dislike. At the end I get in a rather shrewd knock at Gordon Craig, but forget to say what I intended—that Craig's life has been entirely composed of retreats to Moscow.

Shall start for London to-night and sleep somewhere on the road. Grand sea and sorry to leave. Only one thing worries me about this Journal, and that is the time it will take. Have spent exactly 5 hours writing these first four days, or  $1\frac{1}{4}$  hours per day. This is too much. But, perhaps it's only the initial splash. I can give it 15 minutes a day. Not more.

After midnight, and, technically, I suppose another day. Am at Harrogate, at the George, ridiculously altered a month or so ago to the "St. George". Too tired to go on farther, yet not tired enough to sleep. So, to carry on with this a bit, first recording that with some excellent cold ham and chicken I drank  $\frac{1}{2}$  a bott. of Bollinger without noticing it was vilely corked until the last tablespoonful. Thinking of other things and eating and drinking mechanically, I suppose. This non-noticing of a corked wine happens to me fairly often and always annoys me. It shows absent-mindedness.

In Blyth church, built in 1088, I saw an effigy which reminded me of a good answer by Monty Shearman. Wondering whether to describe a figure on a tomb as "recumbent" or "prone", and suspecting one to mean lying on one's back and the other on one's stomach, I asked M. S. to say how he would describe an effigy's pose. He replied without hesitation: "Lolling!"

The trees here are hardly out, though in the cold wind the thorn was borne to us quite pungently and the sun was a *liquid* disc, like the brass warming-pan cleaned by Monkey Brand. The landscape round New Malton is superb, and York Minster, with the sun new-washed for bed shining full on the west window, looked lovelier than I have ever seen it. Yellow, crisp, and *eatable*, like the crust of apple-pie.

In July 1915 I was in camp at Wensley, near here. Returning from week-end leave in London I opened my *Saturday Review* in the train and read the following poem. I have no idea who the author is, and am told by the experts that as *poetry*, technically considered, it is rubbish. To me it seemed then, and seems still, exquisite. Perhaps the war-time atmosphere which covered everything with a never-to-be-recovered glamour. Here is the poem:

## 9.50 FROM KING'S CROSS

York was a capital city  
 When you were a nameless stew,  
 And therefore the heart has pity,  
 Dear London town, for you.

You may have Piccadilly  
 And flaunt Trafalgar Square,  
 But the lily of York was a lily  
 When you were a tinker's fair.

By seven million people  
 Your roaring streets are trod,  
 But there's room by the Minster steeple  
 For the whole of the world—and God.

Where is the pride, there the pit is  
 Digged, and the end will come,  
 An end with the proud lost cities,  
 Babylon, Athens, Rome.

The kingships pass and the power,  
 When the Kingdom of God is come,  
 And the bells in the Minster tower  
 Answer for York, *adsum*.

And therefore I will remember  
 How brief your lanterns burn  
 —Doomed gold by night, and amber  
 At dawn—and I'll return.

H. W.

I visited Wensley a month or so ago, and could not discover, or be quite sure about, exactly where the camp used to be, though I could locate the field where my horse threw me at riding-school and I had to get on again because I could not funk in the presence of some two hundred Tommies sitting grinning on the wall! When I found I could not locate the site of my beloved tent—I was really happy in it—I could have howled. Had the same experience at Codford St. Mary. Better luck at Chiseldon, Wilts., when we were quartered in a farm-house. But in the fields no trace of all our pride, pomp and circumstance. *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret*. Is that how it goes?



I saw a playlet the other day in which an officer who had bungled something and so caused the loss of twenty-six of his men felt compelled to visit and re-visit the scene of his tragic bungling. Is this common? And does it happen to people who have nothing to blame themselves for? Do the men who gazed at Hill 60 for months ever want to see it again? Does the obsession of Ypres exist? Is there any nostalgia for the mud of Flanders? I wasn't at the Front for more than half a day and then only by mistake.

*June 7.* Went to Mills's circus last night and enjoyed every moment of it. Alfred Lester had never seen a circus before, and laughed only when somebody fell down. Didn't believe the zebras and thought they were donkeys painted—"they're all the same pattern".

What a relief to be able to set down here *exactly* what I think, and not to have to make an article out of it. How sick I am of being whimsical *à la* Kenneth Grahame or erudite about Toulouse-Lautrec or up-to-date with Dame Laura Knight—who sees pewter figures on zinc horses—or still more up-to-date by knowing about Thérèse Lessore whose circus pictures were praised by Frank Rutter last Sunday.

I kept seeing resemblances everywhere. One little dwarf—some dwarfs are bigger than others—reminded me of Charles Laughton, one of the clowns wearing a flaming aureole of silly yellow hair was very like Gordon Craig, while one of the elephants was *exactly* like Eliza Aria, and wore a mantilla just like hers, only it was the size of the back of a kitchen chair. The other three elephants were all rather like Y——, the pianist. Y—— dying a few weeks ago but, I hear, is getting better. He must weigh 24 stone, and at his worst was still eating whole chickens at a meal. One of the acrobats had a sore throat. Does Mills travel a hospital, and how do sick people who lead a rough life manage? Perhaps they aren't often ill?

There was one fellow in the show who did nothing except rope-spinning, but did it so well that we held our breaths. He was the ugliest handsome devil I have seen for years, with a squint or glide in one eye that went right round the back



*Pauline Viardot*



of his head. Watching him I wondered how we can have arrived at judging people by their morals, table manners, or other irrelevant standard.

The Wallendas gave their usual "sick-making" performance on the high wire. At Olympia last Christmas I sat next to Tom Webster who, when this was going on, dropped to his knees and hid his head in my lap. But what struck me most was the spick-and-spanness of this travelling show which was like a London first-night down to the ringmaster's gloves of new, white kid. One *expects* a circus at Olympia, but not in these fields. They were playing in York at 9.30 on Saturday night and the show was up and ready to open in this field at Harrogate at 4 o'clock on Sunday afternoon. The staff is 350, with 50 local labourers to pull down at one place and another 50 to set up in the next town. The whole thing beautifully stage-managed. I noticed that the Yorkshire audience did not acclaim a turn when it came on but waited till it had justified applause.

Mills has had a career anybody might envy. Carriage-builder. Then whip to Miss Ella Ross of Sale, Manchester. Used to drive her famous blacks in all the show-grounds of England—Grand Vulcan and that lot. Then the war, and Mills made a fortune. Then the circus. Was a bit cock-a-hoop at one time, to be expected in a man who has got on too well. Then came a dreadful illness—eczema from head to foot, literally from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. Borne these two years with extraordinary courage and patience. That a career which began in funereal gloom should have reached these dazzling and Olympian heights recalls the story Coquelin used to tell of a rival of his young days who won the first prize for comedy at the Conservatoire and ultimately made a fortune in the *pompes funèbres*. Our Bertram has done it the other way round.

Somebody broke the window of the car in the car-park.

When we drove past the field on the way to town this morning there was our boss-eyed ruffian of the night before standing on a horse and spinning a rope in the sunlight. Now he looked exactly like a picture by Laura Knight, which makes

me think that she paints her things in the day-time. This must be why they don't have the proper night effect.

Lunched at Newark, the Clinton Arms. Had not been in this hotel since 1911 when I showed Talke Princess at Newark Show and had with me a feather-weight boxer I was running at the time. But as I had to pay when he lost and never "drew" when he won I soon got tired of the game. Remember that he had fought 20 rounds and lost on points the night before, and that the state of his nose and eyes drew more attention than my pony's action.

Nothing extraordinary on the run home. Except that I composed a distich in the Alfred Austin manner :

June is advancing and sun getting hotter,  
Which means the laburnums are starting to totter.

Except, too, that we saw a high-powered Bentley perched on the top of a hedge like a big white butterfly. This had happened some ten minutes before we arrived and a witness explained that the driver had been trying to get round a lorry on the bend, had met something and taken the hedge for safety. All this in reply to my question : "How gat it there?" Our car did 998 miles on  $31\frac{1}{2}$  gals., or nearly 32 miles to gallon. Came home from Harrogate 206 miles in 6 hours actual road time.

The last 50 miles clouded by the usual terror of accumulated correspondence. Two unpleasant missives. They want £84 for dilapidations at Palace Court and a promissory note for £100 falls due on the 25th and will I? The answer is not that I won't, but that I shan't be able to. Letter from Bank informing me that I am overdrawn and suggesting that a remittance intended for them may have gone astray. It hasn't.

*Hocus-Pocus* at Garrick Theatre. May excellent as a not too vulgar American plutocrat, and *no* resemblance to her German in the other play. Lion wanted her to over-act, which she did for the first six nights at Manchester. On Saturday, she tells me, she played the part naturally, i.e. according to the American woman's nature, and stood stock-still while delivering her lines, which of course had immense effect. Lion, who

had insisted upon her rushing about the stage in the Athene Seyler manner, was the first to congratulate her.

Supped at Savage Club with Billy Leonard and Peter Page. Peter told me Bobby Andrews's remark : " What *Cavalcade* did for the British Empire *The Miracle* is doing for God ! "

June 8. Invited by two somebodies I don't know to attend a welcome lunch to somebody I have never heard of returning from Australia, a country I am not interested in. Refused.

Invited by Violet, Duchess of Rutland, to an exhibition of her drawings. The invitation marked " Press ", with a note on back of card : " I shall be all the afternoon in my own house in case you care to look in afterwards. " Signed, " V. R. " Am thinking of framing this after altering the address to Windsor Castle and ante-dating it.

Took Leo Pavia to lunch at Bertorelli's, having vowed last night to frequent Lyons in perpetuity. Minestrone, tournedos with mushroom sauce, excellent bottle of St. Julien, cigar, 13s. 11d. Tip 1s., since I must economise somewhere. Leo is a pupil of Leschetizky and knew Brahms—i.e. he once opened the door to him. Likes to think he might have been the grandson of either Rossini or Meyerbeer, both of whom stayed at his grandparents' house in Regent's Square in the 'fifties, but is afraid his grandmother was honest. Perpetually hard up, and a wit who spends his life pouring vinegar on troubled waters. Everybody's enemy except his own. At lunch to-day he said it was absurd for me to keep a diary and suggested a noctuary !

A paper for which I write under a pseudonym wanted me to notice the Camargo Ballet at the Savoy. Vaughan Williams's " Job ", Walton's " Façade ", some Scarlatti, and Ravel's " The Enchanted Grove ". Beecham conducting. Would like to see this, but will not write about it if I can help it. Strongly object to ignoramus writing about the drama, and realise that I know nothing about ballet. If people have mouths, why don't they speak through them instead of making signs ? About as sensible, I suppose, as to ask why when we can get apples we want Cézanne to draw them. Don't defend my attitude, but stick to it.

The advantage of a male secretary is that you can go on working while you are dressing or undressing. Worked out an entire theory of ballet when I was in my pants, dressing for the play. Jock says that in my pants I look exactly like those monstrosities which used to advertise Horne's, or somebody's, underwear on the coping of the building at the corner of Tottenham Court Road and New Oxford Street recently pulled down. The British public which will not have Epstein gazed on these for forty years with affection and appreciation !

Marie Tempest in *The Vinegar Tree* at the St. James's Theatre. Brilliant and witty performance by this valiant and ageless lady. Celia Johnson in cast. Met her uncle on the first tee at a golf course recently. He said : "Is my niece as good as you say she is ?" I said "No !" drove off and walked away. I will *not* be talked to about the theatre when I am playing golf. Supper at Savoy with Shearman. Edith Shackleton and a friend came over for coffee. Edith is a tower of sympathy to people in trouble, and spends her quick and noble mind generously. M. S. had caviare and lager, plus a large port ; I had cold tongue, a pint of Bollinger (N.V.) and a cigar. Monty offered to pay and I said No, regretfully. Bill £1 16s. 6d. Tip 3/6.

June 9. Richmond show with Tony Baerlein. Day of economy to make up for last night. Made Tony lunch at his hotel, where he is *en pension*, while I took Alfred Lester to lunch at the pub opposite. Good meal for two at, I think, 4/- inclusive of drinks.

Classes at show not very interesting ; they never are on first day. Met many old friends and had a chat with George Lancaster, my old stud-groom, who drove First Edition years ago. To-day he got third in the pony pairs with two tiny daughters of my old pony Vortex. Geoffrey Bennett, the author of *Famous Harness Horses*, said he would like to build a special *drawing-room* for them, and that gives their quality exactly. Very interesting to listen to Tony, who is wildly intelligent and had never seen a horse. He says there is more "interest" in a pair when they are not in step—it is more cinematographic.

Met old Sir Edward Stern, very shrunk and tiny and of course very well gloved and hatted. Very much the old, spidery beau of *Vanity Fair* in the 'sixties. Also saw Gooch, who must be nearly 90. A great whip, though I never saw him in his prime.

Met on the road an unmistakable *grande dame* in the seventies, or perhaps older, sitting in the dickey of a two-seater. At what age should matrons eschew dickets? I suppose there are times when the hey-day in the blood wants fiercing up.

Palladium in the evening. No dinner and for this reason. Had finished *S.T.* article on Marie Tempest and versatility in acting, when I came across a very suggestive, though wrong-headed passage in Walkley's *Still More Prejudice*. So had to take my stuff out of its envelope already addressed, insert the Walkley passage and show where A. B. W. was wrong. This meant other alterations, cuttings, dove-tailings, etc., and took a good hour or more. As an example of Jock's diligence, I find he has indexed all three vols. of A. B. W.'s essays. By the way, when Walkley died I wanted to write a column, but Rees wouldn't have more than a quarter-col., so I left it alone.

Good show of all-fooling at Palladium, except that a young woman gave the most hideous dance I have ever seen. It consisted in turning half a cartwheel, crossing her legs and dropping to the floor plumb on her buttocks. Audience madly enthusiastic about this.

Brought supper home.  $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of cold roast beef 10d., small bott. Military Pickle 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., beer in flat, taxi 3/-. Pass-book has arrived. Have hidden it, *unopened*.

My Arnold Bennett review appeared this morning. I feel it would have been better a week ago. It is exactly 1 year to-day since I started reviewing for the *Daily Express*.

Books received	.	.	.	.	.	840
Read and reviewed	.	.	.	.	.	174
Glanced at and recommended	.	.	.	.	.	63

At least 500 of these books could be pronounced worthless at sight.



*June 10.* Horse-show again. The judges came a cropper over one class, putting Fish's Tophet, an ordinary trapper, in front of Miller's Jix, Minoprio's Mickey Mouse and a good little pony belonging to Henriques and driven by George Lancaster. In everybody's opinion, including Fish, Tophet should have been fourth. I believe the judges mistook Tophet for Colman's Magnet, a very different animal.

Had an interesting debate to-day with Tony. Lord X—having been rude to a footman, the man knocked him down, whereupon Lord X—apologised and gave him £10. Tony says the money was wrong. I explained it is the only form of apology a footman understands. An apology "don't cost 'im nothink", but the quid is evidence of sincerity. Tony not convinced.

Received letter from Ernest Newman replying to mine asking if he would like to notice the forthcoming Wagner play :

DEAR AGATE,

*Tadworth,*

Who am I that I should have the felicity of covering this play? No, I leave it to you. If, after reading your notice, I come to the conclusion that the drama has soared to the expected height of imbecility, I shall go and see it for my private fun. I can pretty well imagine what they will do with it! I can already see Mathilde Wesendonk, and Minna, and Cosima, and the whole procession of them!

Do you remember Tree's Beethoven? And Guitry's Mozart—with music by Reynaldo Hahn!!! I could not help thinking, when I heard this, how much better it would have been if Reynaldo Hahn had died and Mozart had written the music.

I can already hear Wagner's music on a London theatre orchestra. Richard, forgive them, for they know not what they do!

Yours always,

ERNEST NEWMAN.

Giving permission to reprint this Ernest wrote :

*Tadworth,*

6.9.34.

DEAR JAMES,

That letter was a bit of a puzzle to me at first, but on racking my devastated brain I seem to remember that a

play with Wagner in it was produced some time ago. By all means print the thing if you think it worth it.

I came across a lovely German howler the other day. You, being a dramatic critic, will remember the scene in Sophocles' *Ajax* in which Odysseus begs the King not to inflict on the body of Ajax the indignity of non-burial—an awful thing in Greek eyes. "I shall come to this myself," says Odysseus by way of explaining his anxiety on the subject. A German translator turns this into "I shall attend the funeral myself!"

I am doing my own reminiscences, but they won't be published till after I am dead. I want to die a natural death.

Yours always,

ERNEST NEWMAN.

Broadcast. Subject : Do actors feel ? Suggested by Ervine's ruminations on this hackneyed theme. Classed him with Diderot as a "distinguished philosopher". Discussed that old thing "enthusiasm for the drama", and said it is what managers want me to have when they have got a bad play and know it. "Enthusiasm for drama" means gush about muck !

Took Tony to dinner at Jardin des Gourmets. Good dinner and bottle of Châteauneuf. About 25/-. *The Price of Wisdom* at the Ambassadors, in which Irene Vanbrugh (technique of 1895) gives up three-fourths of her income because it is making her worldly and then blackmails a toffee-king who is persecuting her daughter. Howls of derision from my godson—me much more tolerant. The manager, a nice, white-haired old gent called Barry, took us on to the roof to drink brandy and marvel at, to right, the dressing-room windows, all illuminated and open, of the St. Martin's Theatre ; to left, a small window through which can be seen the interior of Wesley's chapel, where the ghost of the great preacher is said to walk. The first is a subject for a painter. Sickert best, but one of the London Group would do ; the second is material for an essay. Used to live in West Street in a tiny flat partly over and partly next door to this chapel, but was never troubled by the ghost, perhaps because once, when I had a party, and the electric

light failed, I refused to steal the altar candles. (We had access to the chapel.)

Took Tony to Monty Shearman's after theatre and met Peter Derwent, who used to be the perfect Adonis. Tommy Earp also. Told Tony story of how Tommy was once found asleep in a wheel-barrow in Covent Garden in the early morning. The magistrate asked why. Tommy said, "For valetudinarian reasons." Magistrate: "Don't talk to me as though you were President of the Oxford Union." Tommy: "I am!" Finished work at 3.30.

June 11. Golf at Burnham Beeches. Worst round ever, taking 48 for first nine holes.

Dined at Garrick with Monty. Food good, wine better and talk quite first-class, at least mine was; Monty just ate and grunted. *Out of the Bottle*, a musical comedy version of Anstey's story. Rubbish, and not even dirty. No fun and no music. Clifford Mollison's idea of humour in this piece is to look as if a gumboil was plaguing him. Can be a brilliant actor when he wants. Wrote my notice in under 15 minutes.

June 12. Worked all day, except that I went to bed for an hour in the afternoon. My Saturday-night notice of the Hippodrome show consists entirely of misprints. Yet I wrote it more than legibly. They got Anstey all right in the notice but put "ANSNEY" in the heading. Also made me talk of "Danse der ventre". Wrote to Hadley, the new editor, saying I was sure he would like to have a stick to beat some bloody fool of a proof-reader with. Some day one of these letters will get me into trouble.

Am feeling ill, with good reason, having had too much dinner, brandy and cigar, etc., and am going to bed. Party going on in flat underneath. Why do other people's parties always sound silly? Must read at least four books to-morrow for *D.E.* article.

June 13. Discovered there was a still later "Late London Edition" of *S.T.* in which printer's errors had been corrected. Fortunately letter to Hadley had not been posted.

Ralph Hill, editor of the proposed *Radio-Graphic*, came to lunch. Wants me to write a weekly gramophone article. Said I should want exorbitant rate of pay, and a contract. He agreed, subject to paper coming into existence, and after I had expended oceans of Agatian charm on him. Very thing! This now fills me up with work again.

In the evening took Jock to see André Brulé and Madeleine Lély in *L'Épervier* by Francis de Croisset. Awful, old-fashioned, theatrical muck. Jock, thinking it was a momentous occasion, turned up in full evening dress, *avec chapeau*, while I had just come from golf and was in plus-fours.

After theatre wrote *D.E.* article. Bed at 3 o'clock, rather fagged, with summer cold or hay-fever coming on. No remedies in the house.

*June 14.* Woke up tired. Lunched with Cedric Hardwicke.

Cedric said if actors feel their parts, why didn't Lady Macbeth kill the grooms? Played golf with Mark Hambourg at Wimbledon Park. Gave him a stroke a hole and halved match. Was round in 77, a bad score for this potty little course. Mark plays unexpectedly well, and putts like he plays Beethoven, with complete confidence.

*Tell Her the Truth* at Saville Theatre. Not bad. Bobby Howes makes all childless women feel that this is the kind of son they would like to have had.

*June 15.* Lunched to-day with Lambert, the editor of *The Listener*. I am to do an article (to be paid for on delivery of MS.) about how it feels to broadcast in the new building. Lunched at Kettner's. Said I liked claret, went upstairs to wash, and when I came back found L. had ordered a red Graves, which I hate. Fortunately cold so bad that couldn't taste. Jack Waller, who ran last night's show, came over and insisted on offering me a cigar, which I accepted. He crowed with delight like a baby.

Back at B.B.C. at 2.45. Obviously if I am to record my impressions as a broadcaster I can only speak of what, as a broadcaster, I am conscious of. With a superb want of logic they insisted on taking me over the whole building, which

took 2 hours, made me miss an important appointment and advanced me nothing. Had a twinge on recognising in Studio 3D Arnold Bennett's chair, from which I may have to broadcast some day, in which case I shall ask for another. It is extraordinary how this man affects me! Noted, or rather *verified*, the fact that on third floor, which is the talks floor, there is *no lavatory for men*, but only for women, who do not give talks! Bennett would have made this the major point of his article, and I shall do the same.

Tried on the official showing me round the story of the young Frenchman who, having pursued a very busy statesman for six months and catching him in a public urinal, said: "Sir, this is the first time in six months that I have found a suitable opportunity to ask you for the hand of your daughter." Story complete failure.

Afterwards to Victoria and Albert Museum. Exactly 2 hours late for my appointment with Mrs. Enthoven, who had gone. Spent an hour wandering about, and went back to have another look at Canova's "Sleeping Woman", which I like better than the Rodins!!!! She really seems asleep, which I suppose is like saying that Frith's "Derby Day" is really like Derby Day. Michael Angelo's David seemed to me deformed as it always does. Hands too big. Probably because it is behind something and one has to stand too near it. Much preferred Donatello's David. This is an attractive young man with long curls and a hat like the one Evelyn Laye wears in *Helen*. An improper marble. Saw the Great Bed of Ware. But why stick a statue of a libidinous goat at the foot of it?

*The Secret Woman* by Eden Phillpotts at the Duchess. Hard-working Devonshire accent by everybody, in the middle of which I fell asleep. Comic rustics and a farmer's wife jealous of a dairymaid. Potted critique: "A whore on a tor." Saw Vesta Tilley in the foyer. White-haired!

June 16. Dehn informed me that Paul Osborn, author of *The Vinegar Tree*, told him how gratified he was when I went up to him at his first-night party and congratulated him on his play. *I wasn't at the party!*

Went to Heppell's in Strand for usual indigestion dose.

Then to Savoy, where cold consommé, cutlets (two tiny ones), no veg., lager and cigar cost 12/-. As a bob tip would be 13/-, which is unlucky, gave 2/-. Nobody there except Monckton Hoffe, George Graves and Gerald Cooper, a millionaire who gives concerts, acts, and won't speak to me because I disliked his Iago. Read paper over supper. Ramsay MacDonald at Lausanne says civilisation is crumbling and end in sight. Isn't he confusing civilisation with capitalism? Saw some slums in Nottingham recently which suggested that the sooner something crumbles the better.

George Bishop wants me to spend week-end at Bournemouth with his wife and kiddie.

*Pros.* 1. Am very fond of George, witty, intelligent, shy, charming, kind, and done me lots of good turns.  
Wife a grand sort, and nice kid.

2. Cheap.

*Cons.* I hate Bournemouth, which doesn't suit me.

*June 17.* Lovely drive to Bournemouth. Started 6.20 in perfect weather. Alfred Lester in bad temper, probably nerves through packing in a hurry and being hustled to S.T. offices twice. Met huge crowd coming back from Ascot. Just beyond Sunningdale stopped to light pipe. Car stopped at door of cottage dated 1624 and endowed by Lord somebody as an alms-house. "Old wives a-sunning sit." There was one here at her door and looking distinctly cross about it. Handsome, wealthy country.

Dined at the George, Winchester. 26/6, including tip. Started again with moon "big as a band-box". Kipling, in one of his best stories. Rest of journey spoilt by ideas about bankruptcy, train of thought started by paying for that dinner. Knew quite well there would be a meal waiting at Bournemouth, but can't economise if this means being mean.

The bungalow taken by George for the summer is a real bungalow, at Poole or thereabouts. George insisted on my identifying mainland and islands as though we were characters in a Conrad story. Did this 3 times. Sat on the verandah till 1.30 watching the moon make its way through the trees, and discussed all sorts of things. Said I accepted Nature and

Metaphysics—"Begad," said George, "you remind me of Carlyle"—but could not account for the meanness of the French.

Lay awake debating bankruptcy or at least calling creditors together. Dreamed of York Minster. The whole point of a diary being that one doesn't insert or elaborate, I here refrain from recalling remarkable dreams I have had. Still, I must mention the one about meeting a knight in armour riding a black horse downhill and with his head enclosed in a triangular, wooden cage.

*June 18.* Woke up this morning in a setting for a play by Maugham with Gladys in it. I always enjoy a first night at the Playhouse. You know beforehand that the play won't be dud and that Gladys will give a first-class performance. In her case doggedness, plus Gerald du Maurier, had really done it. Scenery and weather exactly like the early pictures of Monte Carlo with Max Linder. Lie of the land pointed out by George last night now becomes intelligible.

No letters, thank Heaven!

Paper had news of smash on L.M.S. at Stafford. 3 killed, 12 injured (11 seriously). But that is less than 1 day's bag of motor accidents. It isn't that I'm callous about the railway accident, but horrified about the road smashes. Every road and street ought to have a 2-foot wall down the middle to prevent cutting-in.

Wired to Tony that he has got a job with Sidney Bernstein as office-boy and starts on Monday. Went up to Parkstone Golf Course to arrange a round for this evening. Secretary knew me through wireless, and very complimentary and affable. I pretended to be very modest.

Before lunch had an idea for a Grand Guignol play. Husband, wife, lover. Husband a doctor. Lover falls ill and is tended by doctor who has arranged the illness. Trance and apparent death. Lover hears his own funeral service in the crematorium prior to sliding into furnace, but cannot move or give sign of life. The great scene must be earlier, when the doctor gloats over the lover and tells him what is coming to him. Pity Bealby's dead. Have not decided how to end it.

Must the doctor carry his triumph through, or does the coffin wobble, the lover sit up in his grave-clothes and say he never heard a word of what the doctor said, with, to wind up, the G.P. going mad? This occurred to me when I was watching Bishop playing ball with his kiddie!

I want money because it will buy an afternoon like yesterday. Buy the golf, I mean. A blaze of sun, a light, steady wind, and colouring like the South of France. Went up to golf course and played the assistant pro, receiving 6 bisques. He plays at plus 1 and I am 6; therefore 4 or 5 bisques should be enough. But all pros are better than plus 1 on their own course, and I am not 6; either 4 or 14. Couldn't find strength of greens and frequently took 3 putts. Won by 2 and 1, largely because I was playing grandly up to the green.

	s.	d.
Green fee . . . . .	5	0
Pro's fee . . . . .	4	0
Caddies . . . . .	3	6
Two balls . . . . .	4	0
Tip to pro . . . . .	5	0
Tips to caddies . . . . .	3	0
	<u>£1</u>	<u>4 6</u>

Then George and I spent £2 on champagne for Mr. and Mrs. George and me, and beer for Alfred Lester and the two servants' two young men. Must have plenty of champagne. Am so tired of the hostess who says to her husband: "Only get up one bottle, dear. You know I never touch it," and then, being induced to take a sip, has her whack at the bottle like everybody else. One bottle between three is no good! Sole, duck, sweets, magnificently cooked and eaten on verandah with moon and fir trees behaving like the third act in a musical comedy at Daly's. Played cut-throat contract at 3d. a 100. Won 2/-. Read *Jane and the Locusts* for an hour before going to bed. At last a goodish book!

June 19. Spent the morning and afternoon reading 4 bad novels and getting on with *Jane and the Locusts*. Played golf in the evening, again with assistant pro. Same odds



and again won, this time by 4 and 3. The boy completely off his putting.

More champagne, good cold supper and bridge. During the game had one of those idiotic nerve-troubles that seize me sometimes. All my life I have been afraid I may have some sudden, uncontrollable impulse to do the thing I most want not to do. First noticed this at Southport when I was about eighteen and used to take May, who was three, for walks on the pier. I was terrified lest I should snatch her up and throw her into the sea ! Was so worried about this that I consulted a doctor.

But that is a day-time worry ; the sleep-walking fear is worse. I have never walked in my sleep in my life, but for fear I should do so I cannot sleep high up or with an open window unless there is a piece of furniture against it. I dislike houses with a staircase-well for the same reason. I cannot bear to have razors or matches in my bedroom, though I am not so nervous about poisons. At one time I forced myself to keep awake in railway carriages and would not travel in an empty one. Have several times consulted doctors and they all tell me that the people who actually do these things never have any previous fear that they may do them. The man who throws himself over Waterloo Bridge or in front of a train *for no reason* has never had any premonition of it. I suppose the whole thing comes from being over-strung. Have for years had "compulsional neuroses", like touching railings or lamp-posts, or not walking on the cracks in pavements. Have known myself turn out the gas four, eight, sixteen or thirty-two times, always in multiples of four. Have had to have sleeveless vests to avoid pulling at the sleeves, and lots of things like that, to get out of a habit. It started when I was about sixteen. I was changing for a lawn-tennis party, and went back to tidy the clothes I had left on the bed. I remember saying to myself : " If you do that, you will do it all your life ! " I went back, and I have done it all my life. I sometimes take twenty minutes to leave a room through being obliged to do these things. It can't be drink or smoke or too much sex indulgence, because all this started when I had no experience of these. When I was a boy I had to

read the last sentence in any chapter some dozen times "to make sure", and when I am below par I find myself doing this at the theatre, even if the following dialogue is a blank for five minutes. Impossible to describe the hell of all this, and to look at me nobody would believe it. My best cure is to repeat Macbeth's: "Then comes my fit again," and wait till the fit passes. Except for these attacks I also am "whole as the marble, founded as the rock".

*June 20.* Challenged R. A. Whitcombe to play the best ball of self and the young pro, who is apparently called Ed, Whitcombe to concede 6 bisques. This is not as much as it sounds, as assistants playing with their bosses rarely play within a half of their game. Whitcombe has done 61 a dozen times or so on this course and his average round is 68. I began excellently with 4 4 3 5 4 5, the boy never coming in at all. After six holes the match was all square with all bisques intact. Then we got 1 up with 1 bisque left and 3 to play and finally 1 up with bisques gone and 2 to play. Both the boy and I did a bit of cracking hereabouts, and Whitcombe, who is like some genial, witty bear, played magnificently. He was set for a four after a huge drive at the long 17th, I skyed my tee-shot which meant a 5 at best, and Ed was short of the green with two good wooden shots. However, he laid his pitch stone-dead and that meant dormy one. At the 18th—206 yards from back of medal tees which Whitcombe had insisted on—I took my spoon and hit a too-good shot which tucked me up in a bank over the green. Ed pulled his iron into some fearful rough stuff, and Whitcombe put his ball some 10 yards from the pin. Ed got on to the green somehow and holed a good 20-yard putt for a 3. Whitcombe just missed his and we won a first-class match.

*June 21.* Occupied first part of drive to London with comparisons between self and the poet Cowper. Reflected that though I may be stricken I am not in the least like a deer! And so cheered up. Went 4 miles out of our way to look at lovely Braishfield Manor, perhaps the prettiest house I know. Melancholy recurs with thought that through-

out entire holiday have always sat in front leaving the dickey to Bishop who says he prefers it. Also tells me that Shaw told him that from 55 to 60 he continually thought about death and now, at 75, never thinks of it.

Composed a lot of rhymes. Not dissatisfied, indeed rather pleased with :

"B" stands for Balfour  
Whose first name is Oswald.  
What a pity his uncle  
Didn't ask to be Boswelled !

and :

Sir Nigel Playfair  
Went back to Mayfair  
"Hammersmith for Hammersmithians !"  
Was one of his pithy'uns.

also :

Komisarjevsky  
Was born on the Nevsky ;  
The next-best producer  
Lives in Ragusa.

Went to Monty's new flat. His previous flat in Durham House Street was burgled two days after he left. Very fine Adam room in the new one with a good ceiling and five big windows. The Matisse over the mantelpiece, of course. The Sickert "Girl Sitting on Bed" has a wall to itself and the new lighting makes it a new picture. All the Utrillos show up well. Tommy Earp and St. John Hutchinson there ; the latter is the only man I have ever met with Micawber's "roll in the voice". When he likes, Hutchy can be very witty. Of the young bloods who abound in country houses he said : "The difference between us is that I like talking about hock and they only know about hocks." Somebody saying that Lady Hawtrey, whose face had more lines than Mars boasts canals, had taken a new lease of life, Hutchy said : "Not another ninety-nine years, surely !"

When the others had gone made Monty change the placings of his Vuillard and Renoir. The Vuillard is intimate and must be on the line ; the Renoir is a dull subject—A Woodland Path—which can do with skying. Monty confessed that the dove-grey curtains by Allan Walton cost £58. Those in

the small room are by Duncan Grant, and both sets are lovely. Monty's taste is really extraordinary. Pictures that will some day obviously make part of a public bequest—"The Montague Shearman Collection"—Epstein's head of Meum Stewart, curtains by modern artists, rugs from Mexico, one or two dilapidated period chairs of great beauty and impossible to sit on, a huge couch and two armchairs of exceeding comfort, a cheap 12-foot book-case filled with 18th-century books, and a large deal table littered with drinks, complete the room. The table was originally plain, unpainted deal like an orderly-room table. It clears the room of any possible charge of affectation. Monty used to hang up the notice he got out of a Paris brothel, or was procured for him therefrom :

PRIÈRE DE NE PAS  
MONTER SUR LE LIT  
SANS ÔTER LES CHAUSSURES

Unfortunately somebody stole this. We used it in *Gemel*.

Then Monty went to Mexico and let the flat to Meum Stewart, who had the table painted black to make it more artistic, Monty supposes. I think he should scrap this and get a new one, deal-coloured. But Monty does not do things for effect ; he just chooses what he likes, and he always likes the right things. If somebody spoils something it must stay spoilt. His new flat makes me very dissatisfied with mine which is elaborate. Bed at 3.

*June 22.* Dictated B.B.C. talk in bed, beginning 11 o'clock and finishing 2.50. How Jock stands it I don't know. Promised to take him out to lunch. Actually sandwiches at Bodega and draught champagne. Asked name of wine and told "Mozoo". Asked to be shown bottle and found "Grand Vin Mousseux".

French players in *Le Prince Jean* by Charles Méré. Tedious story of blackmail in high life. Left after third act.

Supper at Savage Club. Norman O'Neill, Stampa, Basil Cameron, Hubert Harben, Billy Leonard, Jetsam of Flotsam and Jetsam, and a quite dreadful Scotch guest. Billy Leonard supremely witty. Asked if we had heard about an actress

much in the Divorce Court going into Shakespeare. "What as?" said somebody. "First Gold-digger," said Billy. Following on my saying that a critic can overlook and forget to notice a perfect performance, Hubert Harben told me this. Asked to what he attributed his success Tree said, "Very early in my career I made up my mind to be always a little out of the picture!" Bed at 3.30. Asked the people in the flat below to have a night-cap and they wouldn't leave!

June 23. The lavatory basin and the w.c. having successfully leaked into the flat below, it is now the turn of the bath which started this morning. House full of plumbers. To add to the inconvenience one of Whiteley's vans, colliding with the back of this house, which overlooks Whiteley's yard, severed the pipe of a gas lamp fixed to the wall outside study window. Result, room flooded with gas. At once 'phoned Whiteleys who were courteous. Expected them to say the house had banged into their van, but they didn't. Six people to inspect within 20 minutes. Not bad. Plumbers arrived under 4 hours. Not too bad.

Received letter from Paul's mother. It seems that Paul has been to Shrewsbury in his capacity of old boy and written a notice of the school's dramatic society in *The Salopian*. This is exactly what I did in *The Giggleswick Chronicle* and *Ulula*, the Manchester Grammar School Magazine. How history repeats itself! Only Paul is twenty times as good as I was at his age or perhaps am now. My godson (*Aet.* 20) writes:

H. A. Rée, as the drunkard on the verge of *delirium tremens*, looked green and macabre; his intonation might have been a little thicker, as befitted one so inebriated, but the glassy blankness of his eye will ever remain a memory of extreme horror. J. S. Lancaster in a Savile Row mackintosh and flawless plus-fours was all that a traveller of his breeding should be. S. D. W. Seaver, as the landlord, was audible without being impressive, and B. T. O. Winfield, as Smith, was impressive without being audible. The scenery was simple but suggestive—though the same cannot be said of the storm, when the lightning was more convincing than the thunder (which ceased with an abruptness that disavowed the

Hand of God), and the thunder, in its turn, more convincing than the somewhat spasmodic and twittering representation of a North-Easter.

The play was called *Thread o' Scarlet*, but Paul does not say who by, which in a journalist would be naughty. Jock says Paul will be a person before Tony. Am very much interested in both. Paul is essentially *doux*, but can undoubtedly write. Tony is opinionated, arrogant, forceful, with a needle-brain like his father, and so far has given no sign of ability beyond the unassuming assumption that he is chock-full of it. "Don't you ever write anything?" Jock asked Tony, who answered quite seriously, "Yes, I am writing a brilliant novel!" Both have beautiful manners and that quality of deference to older people which is a sign of good breeding. I don't want, in fact I hate to be deferred to, but it is proper that they should defer, and I shall keep them to it *for their sake*.

Lunched at the Club with Ralph Richardson and Cedric Hardwicke, who had brought Boswell's *On the Profession of a Player* for me. A year or two ago Richardson had the habit of acting all his parts with his buttocks. I cured him of this, and his Henry V had no backside at all, though it reappeared, and rightly, in his next comic part.

*June 24.* Went last night to *Fanfare*, the new revue at the Prince Edward. Noisy and dull. Violet Loraine staged another come-back, but I never rated her talent as extravagantly as some did. I think we confounded the war-atmosphere of *The Bing Boys* with her abilities, which are another pair of shoes. Last night she sang "If you were the only Girl in the World" and held up the show.

Oddly enough Edmund Blunden's new essay *Fall In, Ghosts* came to hand to-day. With damnable carelessness the cover prints the title *Fall, In Ghosts*. This is an account of a battalion reunion of this year, and it strikes a note which I feel tremendously, and which *must* be wrong. That war, the most dreadful thing on earth, brings with it the loveliest comradeship is inescapable. The subsequent nostalgia, exquisitely unbearable, also cannot be escaped. But one must fight against this.

Composed another Bentley :

“ Is life a boon ? ”  
Puzzled June ;  
But she made a guess  
In the *Sunday Express*.

At the next table at lunch (a little place in Queen's Road, very good and not dear) I noted a common little thing, in a bedraggled, flowered frock with a floppy hat and too much assumption of manner. She was with a Jap and explaining some social affront, with a great deal of “ She said to me, she says ”. I wondered what the Jap thought of her ; his manner was impeccable. In the street saw an English youth with his arm in a splint, and carrying in the hand at the end of the splint a pair of gloves !

Made up another rhyme :

The Macintosh  
Is posh  
He calls the MacGillicuddy  
Buddy.

Broadcast not too badly, though I over-ran my time by five minutes. Motored out to Beaconsfield and had a look round the cottage, which I cannot keep up because of my debts. Have often read and quoted Hamlet's : “ Fie on't ! ah fie ! 'tis an unweeded garden,” etc., etc. But until this evening I never really saw an unweeded garden ! The grass on the lawn is three feet high, and the little paths and borders the same. Yet it is not true that “ things rank and gross in nature Possess it merely ”. There are hundreds of roses and all manner of flowers with some beautiful poppies. All neat and cosy inside except that the hall-floor was choked with bills. Rescued a few photos of Sarah Bernhardt. Dined at a hotel at Windsor. Luke-warm lamb, abominable salad, good gooseberry tart, excellent pint of Clos de Vougeot, middling cigar. Toddled slowly to London, and turned over some pages of Ethel Mannin's quaint *Commonsense and the Child*. Went to bed at 4 a.m. after late supper at Savoy Grill with Herbert Morgan and a young woman who thought Mrs. Constant Lambert unattractive. I flared up and said she was the *only* woman in the room an artist would look at twice. Denison Moss brought over a vivacious little American lady

with no eyebrows who has written a book on India, about which country she and Morgan argued interminably.

June 25. At the Savage Club Willie Richardson said : " If an anecdote is really good it will stand explaining."

June 26. Motored down to Brighton, and noted a *Daily Herald* contents bill describing the revolution in Siam as " Revolution in Land of Sacred Elephants ". Bishop asked me down to Bournemouth, but refused since I do not want to spoil the recollection of a perfect week-end with one possibly less good. My ex-chauffeur and still good friend Elliott driving, as too much of Alfred Lester is melancholy. Sometimes wish I could drive myself. Had just turned Whiteley's corner when I ran into George Felton Mathew, editor of an architectural review. Asked him to come along, which he did. Asked him also whether he ever reads his paper, which must be Greek except to estate-agents. He said : " Damn it, I write it ! " George is a descendant of the George Felton Mathew to whom Keats dedicated a poem, and who thought his poems were full of a " delicate sensibility " lacking in Keats !

Sleep as far as Crawley and wake up in time to reflect that *On the Brighton Road* by Richard Middleton must be very nearly the most exquisite of all short stories.

Dined at Pec's, on balcony about nine o'clock. Anchovies, cold lamb, an excellent Beaune and a good cigar. *L'heure bleue*, and all that sort of thing. Felt at once cheerful and sentimental—a rare combination. Kept repeating to myself four lines of somebody's translation of Rimbaud :

I want no water of Europe but the cold  
Dark puddle a sad-hearted child squats by,  
And launches out towards the scented dusk  
A boat as frail as a May butterfly.

I feel that this is poetry despite the words " scented dusk ".

About ten o'clock the electric sign over our heads began to function, turning our lamb into pink, newly-butchered slabs. Is there anything more romantic than a pier lit up, or more desolating than one whose lights are suddenly put out ?

This morning went on Palace pier to hear the 4th Queen's



Own Hussars. Fantasia on coach-horn  $\frac{1}{4}$  tone flat ! Decided if ever this diary is published to call it *Myself When Old*. Why do I write it? For immortality? But how much immortality? Ten years? A hundred? Ten thousand? "*La gloire est le soleil des morts*." Yes. But does it warm them? I enjoy keeping this diary, yet would not write a word except with the notion that some day somebody may read it. Would a painter put anything on canvas if the canvas were never to be seen by living eye? Is not a writer without readers like an actor without a public? Compare the poet in *Le Lys Rouge*, who cared so little for any earthly future that he wrote his poems on cigarette papers. "Thus my verses retain only a kind of metaphysical existence." But what a purely metaphysical young man this pure young man must have been. There is an essay here, and I am wasting money.

Sent George off with Elliott to lunch and amuse themselves. Old fogeys should guard against becoming bores. Lunched at the Albion—lobster, cold beef, pint of Bollinger N.V.—and heard that Harry Preston is very ill. A pocket genius, and a better showman than even Cochran, the show being H. P. himself. Of course he cannot help seeming to be *faux bonhomme*. If he had not made himself this mask, having to be over-joyed at meeting total strangers fifty times a day would have polished him off years ago.

Slept in uncomfortable chair on front from 4 till 6.30.

Listened to band on West Pier (Royal Scots) from 8 to 9.30. Read papers. St. John Ervine has this fine passage in the *Observer* :

There is a great ferment in the earth, but whether it will produce good wine or merely froth, I cannot tell. The neo-democracy which is everywhere approved seems to me to be the madness of nit-wits who suppose that they are entitled to the fruits of civilisation without making any effort to cultivate them or even any knowledge that they are cultivated. Yet the supreme fact of life is this, that if a few thousands, men and women, were simultaneously to die, civilisation would vanish in a generation and barbarism would again be supreme. The vast mob knows little, but expects to enjoy all, and the infamy of infamies is that many

men of intellect flatter the mob by assuring it that its desires and its dictation alone are important. We are supine because we will not learn the world's lesson, that men must work with the whole of their power if they are to keep what was won for them, and to increase it for those who will follow them.

A strange couple walked past—a six-foot, full-blooded African negro, very nearly the handsomest man I have ever seen, and a white dwarf of obvious racial inferiority.

George Mathew quoted a saying from the Chinese :

We cannot help the birds of sadness flying over our heads,  
But we need not let them build their nests in our hair.

If I have read this before I have forgotten it. George also told me that he had read *The Turn of the Screw* in a bedroom by candle-light without a qualm. Yet I failed to finish this on the Leas at Folkestone on a hot August Bank Holiday with the band playing "The Gondoliers". I remember running away and leaving the book on the seat!

Dined at Pec's again. Sat down at 9.50 and found we had to swallow our wine by 10. *Doux pays!* Intended to drive home to-night, but some fool ran into Elliott from behind when he was out this afternoon with Mathew. Result a burst petrol tank. This kind of contretemps does not worry me in the least. A very good two days.

*June 27.* A stage custom I would like to see abolished is that whereby two people hold long conversations with less than an inch between their noses. In real life this would be absolutely impossible, one of the reasons being that you would squint so much that you would never get your eyes back. This convention is wholly idiotic, and it has the further drawback that some very old actors and actresses carry it into real life. I cannot bear talking to anybody unless there is the width of a good-sized dining-table between us.

*June 28.* Am trying hard to cultivate a greater spirit of tolerance and, I think, succeeding except in the matter of women's blood-tub nails. This revolts me. I have a still more freezing contempt for people who call a criticism a "write-up".

June 29. A common fault with playgoers is to dislike a piece because it is not something else. Highbrow critics faulted that poignant anecdote, *Journey's End*, because it was not poetic tragedy. If I re-publish my criticisms I am told that they are not a history of the theatre. When I wrote my little book on Rachel even my publishers complained that it was a *vie scandaleuse* and not a history of the Romantic Movement in France.

Jock has just given me a story he has been writing which he calls his Opus 6 and is entitled *Doubtful Joy*. It begins :

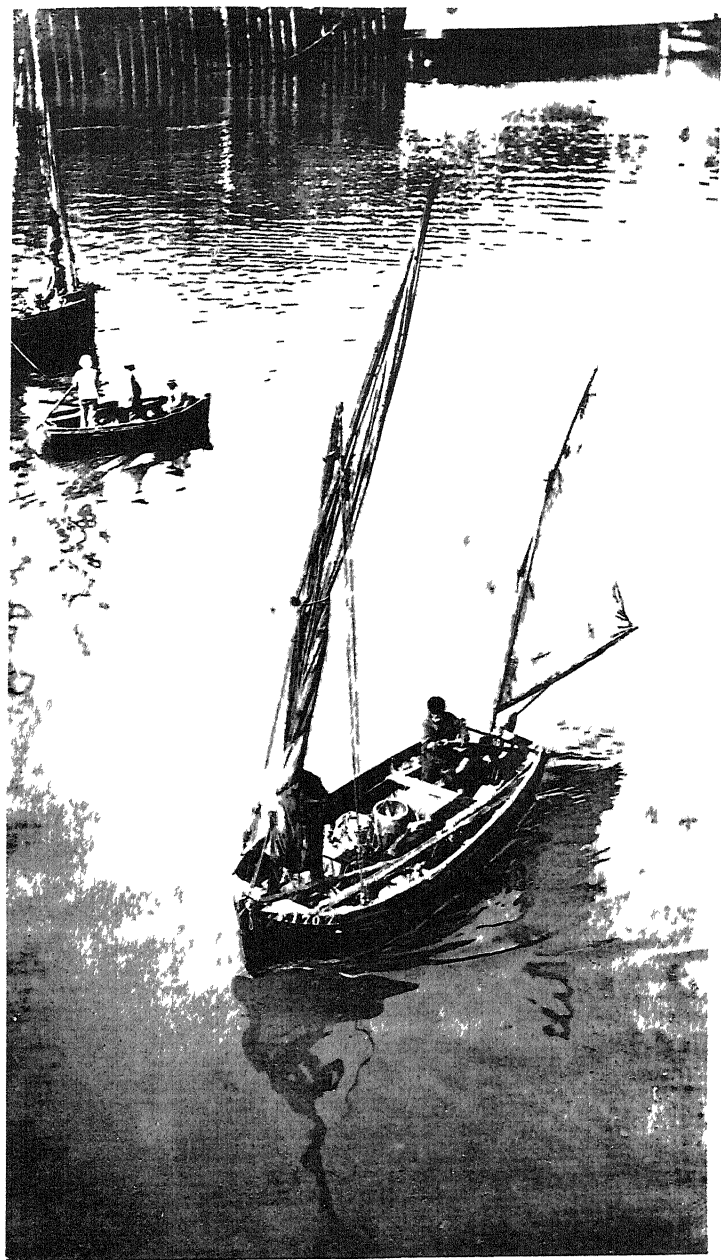
Life is so simple in general, so complex in particular. So thought I at least, at the time when I first viewed Ingaret. She was leaning ungracefully over a four-barred gate, in one of the home counties, I forget which, and the day was a Saturday and boisterous. There was too much of her weight on the right foot, and the left was a shade too far from it. . . .

Of industry by Swedish cataracts ; of the remoter leaves in Batavia ; of a nebula ablaze even in an opera-glass ; of Artemis naked. Of rare topaz pestled and mortared and powdered ; of the bleak cry of a lamb ; of the odour of new glossed paper ; of Archimedes' Principle. Such fantasies, recurrent irrelevant in my head, and a million else beside, all on account of Ingaret, and her bum and her violet eyes.

And the *nouvelle* ends :

Then a youth from one or other of the Hams, the twain that are always meeting, a youth fearfully "Wotcher", ineradicably "Naow". This happened at an evening party at Lady Dastard's, and I must say here that I was astonished at the audacity of Ingaret, the brazenness of her. The woman was capable of reviewing troops she personally knew, of stowing away on a warship. And it was complicated by the fact that my two sons at Harrow were at that party.

Then I caught her having her stockings dried by a fierce lickorish man in a cottage in Wales. It is true that a woman was more or less present as well, but a blank woman—one born to be exhumed. Then in a Cadogan house alone with the Queen of Peru, she who ultimately



*Snapshot at Drefpe*



strangled herself through wearing too many pearls. Ingaret on this occasion gave me an icy, an appalling smile. I left immediately.

Then tritely at Antibes when she was with bathers. In one of these I recognised the slim and creamy torso, the patrician postman of Burford. Beside the ungathered vice he lay, his russet hair, his russet hair. I fled in chagrin. That Ingaret should choose to appear with anyone twice seemed to me to settle the matter. She stands still as I saw her then, her arms outstretched, laughing soft and long.

Yet in the end she married an old unvenerable man, one John Thirlmere. I attended the St. Margaret's wedding and stood behind a pillar looking, I thought, melancholy, but merely, as I heard later, scowling.

There is a middle bit in which he asks :

Would you eat cloth ? Would you bite, chew, swallow field-daisies ? Would you fly straight to the sun ? Or lie with a dead leper ? Or be nuzzled by drunken bears ? Or live a week on frozen cointreau ? Would you read my nonsense ? . . .

Personally I would always read Jock's nonsense because it is great fun and is individual to him despite his resemblance to Firbank of whom he has not read a word.

I think I have let the cottage at Beaconsfield.

*June 30.* Lunched at the Ivy. Talked to Aimée Stuart and listened while Lilian Braithwaite, whom I adore, expounded how she was the least selfish actress on the stage. Basil Rathbone at another table with Gerald du Maurier. Told Bobbie Andrews that Rathbone was a first-class actor in profile. Did he remember his entry on a white horse at the end of *Henry IV* ? "Yes," said Bobbie, "but the horse was in profile too !"

Went to *Evensong* at the Queen's, the play that Knoblock has made out of Beverley Nichols's book. Fine piece of splurgy acting in a showy part by Edith Evans, who now proves herself a great actress by succeeding in rubbish, or something very like it. To be good only in the first-rate is proof that the actress is second-rate. The end of this play

was shockingly mis-managed. First, we had Edith Evans in the centre of the stage, with all the other principals occupying the right half, and the left half empty—a wretched piece of composition. Then Athole Stewart, the producer, appeared, and after him Knoblock. After this there was a long hold-up while Beverley in the wings waged a losing battle with his shyness, during which time everybody in the play, from Irela downwards, lost all they had won of actuality and glamour, and the curtain fell at last upon what might have been mistaken for a huddled pen of amateur sheep. The few moments after the fall of any curtain are vital, for these engender that mysterious news about a play which goes round the town long before the morning papers. What happened at the Queen's Theatre? Long before ten o'clock it was plain that the house had been "got". A gifted actress, the proclaimed darling of the intellectuals, was obviously booked for a *furor* which would include even the mindless; the show had been stopped by open cheering; and the theatre had become alive again with a piece of large, theatrical emotions and acting vivid enough to trounce the pale shadows of the cinema. In view of the probability of this, the actors' calls and their order should have been determined, and the whole thing built up to Edith Evans.

After the theatre supped at Savoy with Monty and Eric Smith. Discussed what "highbrow" means. They think it ought to refer to Aldous Huxley, Virginia Woolf, and all that lot, whereas I use it about people who only go to West-End Shakespeare when some fashionable nigger plays Othello, or to the Old Vic. when they have a protégé in the cast. Eric came home for a drink and chat, which lasted till 3.30 a.m., by which time we had agreed that the problem of the universe cannot be solved. Told Eric how Edgar Baerlein said he had once worked out the odds against a future life and made them to be "a shade worse than five to two".

*July 1.* Motored out to Beaconsfield in the evening. Found one of the local pubs has become a road-house. Dancing floor, wireless-gramophone with loud-speaker, twenty tables, licence, and *not one single customer*.

## Epitaph for Cold Storage :

Rebecca West  
 Passed this acid test :  
 "What a sweet reviewer !"  
 Said those who knew her.

Woke at 11 and had breakfast. Lay in bed till 2.45 and dictated 1,200 words on Beverley's play. Fairly witty. Had rush lunch at Bertorelli's and bumped up and down in dickey of car—Monty in front with Alfred Lester—all the way to Beaconsfield. Smoked and had hiccups. Not good preparation for golf. Coming home saw the Graf Zeppelin looking like a silver cigar about  $\frac{1}{4}$  the size of Windsor Castle and apparently about to torpedo it.

*July 2.* Wretched round of golf at Beaconsfield. Cheered up when, at the Café Royal, somebody pointed out a battered creature of indeterminate sex as the probable model for Epstein's Genesis. Leo said : "No. Degensis !"

*July 3.* Delightful day. Motored to Southend, where I propose to spend August. Grand air, charming golf-course at Thorpe Bay, where I used to play a great deal and of which I have happy recollections. Not been there for six years, but some members and all the caddies remember me. Three in car, and so refused to take with me a new novel ominously entitled *Two Living and One Dead*.

Noted two good churches, one at Limehouse and the other at Poplar. Thought the Commercial Road and East India Dock Road magnificent thoroughfares. Adjurations to happiness on all sides. Film called *Laughing at Life*. Wayside Pulpit has "The man worth while Is the man who can smile, When everything goes dead wrong". Poster announces article by Mrs. Edgar Wallace : "Broke yet rich." On the return spent half an hour in St. Paul's and heard organist play imbecile voluntary at end of service. What they call "extemporising", I suppose. Lovely weather, but too much Zeppelin all day. Seemed to pass over St. Paul's with not more than 100 feet clearance. Inside, people praying in an immense cathedral under a roof infinitely high. Overhead a contrivance dwarfing the cathedral. Relativity again !



*July 4.* Blazing hot. Letter from Saunders, my charming accountant, saying that after allowing for rent, insurance, wages, income tax, instalments on car, cost of getting about, household expenses and re-imbursements, I cannot for the next twelve months reckon on more than a few shillings a day for myself. What somebody in Pinero calls "enough for gloves and button-holes". For most people that ought to mean a competence. But I need a measure of luxury. I am thinking all the time about my work and cannot interrupt that thinking to climb on 'buses and find cheap restaurants. Also I write better when I can have what I want. Or is this the Hjalmar Ekdal stuff that Ibsen was so down on? But I write *out of my wit* and nothing else, and I cannot compass wit in a Lyons Corner House. Not even the A B C of it! Also I don't agree Saunders's arithmetic.

*July 5.* Have disposed of Beaconsfield cottage. So that's off my hands.

Spent the afternoon at the British Museum working on the Anthology. Discovered that Clement Scott is a much underrated and maligned critic. The fact that he couldn't stomach Ibsen in the 'nineties doesn't mean that he was an absolute fool. In 1932 I won't have Pirandello and say so, while being fully aware that time may prove me as much of an ass as Scott. But that is the price of sincerity; if one plays for safety any charlatan can put it over on one.

*July 10.* Have not written in this diary for five days owing to illness which started at 3.30 a.m. on Tuesday. Abominable attack of wind, plus panic, plus heart, which went at 140 to the minute and wouldn't calm down. So had to get up, dress and prowl round for a doctor, who told me I was not going to die that night. Would he bet? A moderate sum, he answered. After getting rid of several balloons full of gas went to bed and slept. Suggested to Alfred Lester, who now sleeps "out", that he might like to sleep "in" for one night. Glum acquiescence in the usual outraged servant manner. Consequently refused to avail myself of his services—which he probably foresaw—and called on Elliott to befriend

me next night, which that good soul did. Bout of wind, panic, heart attack repeated, largely through dining at Monty's off duck and champagne and being bored by *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Was formally examined by the doctor on Thursday. After an hour's poking and prodding he says he can arrange for me to die of something other than heart. BUT, no drink to speak of, a minimum of tobacco, regular meals on a diet, and above all NO WORRY. I agree, and returning to flat find (1) letter from Bank saying I am overdrawn £113 and will I please refrain from drawing further cheques until etc. etc. ; (2) letter from lawyer saying he has received letter from another lawyer threatening to issue writ against me for £500—an old loan—unless I produced £100 in two days ; (3) letter from Inland Revenue demanding £110 in 6 days ; (4) the milkman in person ; and (5) the manageress of the local laundry screaming on the telephone. Settle down to day's work determined not to worry !

Indigestion came on again as I was broadcasting on Friday. Could hardly see the paper. Came down to Southend on Saturday. Good evening round of golf and leisurely dinner. Arrive at bandstand at 9.45 to discover that band stops at 10. Why? Why should English seaside resorts do everything to diminish pleasure? No gambling. Good! No *divertissements sensuels*. Soit! No cigarettes after nine. If it must be! But why in hell's name no music after ten o'clock?

Opening to-day's *S.T.* am a little staggered to find how outspoken I am about an actor's nose, which is not a nose but a proboscis and all the things Cyrano alleges. I end by saying he must not play heroic parts. Is this going too far? I think not. An actor's looks are his medium or part of it, and this nose in profile just won't do.

*July 11.* Fell last night after heat-wave and golf to the extent of a pint of Roederer, two brandies and soda, and a cigar. No ill effects and slept like a top.

At bandstand got into conversation with introspective, Tchehovian market-gardener who said women were always talking to him. I said, "What about?" He replied, "Themselves, and how they are misunderstood." I said, "I understand them perfectly." Told me he is in love, or was,

with a friend of his mother's, a married woman. He admitted to being younger and better-looking than the husband, "and more active". He said he didn't want to go on kissing the woman, of whom he was tired, but had to "for fear". I said, "You mean she threatens to throw herself into the sea." He said, "Exactly." I said, "Give her tuppence," (which is the tram-fare to the end of the pier) and read him a long lecture on Gautier's "J'ai connu beaucoup de femmes qui ont voulu se tuer pour moi. En réalité elles ont toujours voulu me tuer pour elles." I asked him what papers he read. He replied, "The *Chronicle* and the *Sunday News*; they come into the house." I believe that is the way the British public chooses its newspapers. When my young friend's family moves and another family succeeds at 27 Laburnum Road the local newsagent will just 'go on delivering'. Perhaps this way is as good as any other.

The night-porter at this hotel is an ex-policeman and was one of the guard who looked after Monty's father during the trial of the murderers of Sir Henry Wilson. He told me he was very sorry for the men, as they were martyrs and not bandits. I asked which Sir Henry was, but the remark was not appreciated. Heat-wave continues and shall break off here to motor to Clacton, my notion of an earthly paradise.

July 23. Found this on my desk this morning.

TABLE OF COMPTS  
in connection with James Agate's

THE ENGLISH DRAMATIC CRITICS

tendered by  
Alan Dent, his Secretary.

- To open-witted discovery of, and lengthy and careful reading of, Professor Gray's *Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795* throughout the month of May, 1932 . . . . .
- To kindly lending and obtaining of books, some rare, by Leigh Hunt, Goldsmith, Archer, and many others . . . . .
- To astute researches at the British Museum over two weeks in June, 1932, the wary consultation of some eighty or ninety books, and the scrutiny of many pamphlets and periodicals . . . . .

- To helpful and suggestive note-making in connection with these researches ; to a tactful and gracious afternoon with Mrs. Enthoven at the Victoria and Albert Museum ; and to various necessary comings and goings . . . .
- To searching in the files of the *Morning Post* on a morning in July, resuscitating the Rev. Henry Bate, and copying 500 words of him . . . .
- To invaluable enthusiasm throughout ; and to indexing and various small future jobs in connection with *The English Dramatic Critics* likely to be required of me

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 .....

On Sunday I went down to Betty Ricketts's cottage at Effingham. Played Bridge with Rex Evans, a young man called De Yong and son of the boxing referee, and Arthur Benjamin, the composer. Swopped ghost stories with Nancy Price and promised to send her some of my indigestion medicine, which I actually did next day.

Refused an offer from that interesting publisher Peter Davies to do Casanova for him in his series of miniature biographies. Have no interest in Casanova and no knowledge of his period. I proposed Balzac, who would surely fit into a series which already includes Julius Cæsar, Voltaire, Mozart, Marlborough, Akbar, Lenin, Leonardo da Vinci, Saint Paul, Queen Elizabeth and Ruskin. Davies would not have commissioned the last, but it was sent to him without commission and so good that he had to accept it. About Balzac he writes : " I feel (a) that, on the whole, literary figures are less likely than most others to appeal to a wide public, and (b) that whereas Balzac had a remarkable enough life, and still towered twenty years ago, he is now forgotten, to some extent I am afraid dishonoured, and above all unread. So I am not for Balzac." And I re-murmur my favourite quotation : *La gloire est le soleil des morts*. What complete death for a great man when even the sun of glory sets ! Davies, of course, realises that Balzac is a terrific person. But he knows the British public is a terrified ass and will shy at a book about him. Davies ends his letter " Also, between you and me, I want to have a little

joke early next year, and publish Casanovo, Cora Pearl and Oscar Wilde simultaneously. Each should hand on the torch to the next, don't you think?"

Saw the doctor yesterday, who pronounces me much better and says the heart has lost that extra-beat typical of over-smokers, over-drinkers and over-everything-elsers. Perhaps that is why I feel so run down. Have not touched bread or potatoes for a fortnight and am probably thinner, "both to feeling as to sight" as Macbeth more or less says.

*July 27.* Jock complains of being in want of a holiday. So what with bills running up and a secretary running down, there would appear to be little peace for the wicked. Somebody at lunch to-day said that a bad actress is one who on wet days wears a mackintosh. I said a repertory actress is an actress who wears a mackintosh on fine days.

*July 29.* Yesterday *The Times* announced the retirement of E. M. Baerlein from competitive tennis, and to-day it prints a column obituary of Horace Hutchinson, a great name in the days when there was still glamour in the word "brassie". Jock had never heard of him. How queer this general knowledge is! One day last week I tried on several people this list: David Garrick, W. G. Grace, Fred Archer, John Roberts, Tom Sayers, Dan Leno. Jock had not heard of Roberts, and Leo Pavia—a brilliant mind—did not know Sayers. My charwoman knew them all except David Garrick. My brother Edward told me that he had had drinks with six men in a bar at Clapham, and *none* of them knew how Charles I died. One of them said "poisoned". I find it difficult to believe this, but Edward swears it's true.

*Aug. 3.* So far as I know I am not in the least psychic. Yet sometimes, when I am writing and think suddenly of somebody, the next word appears in the handwriting of the person thought of. It only lasts for one word, and I cannot do this at will. It is entirely sub-conscious; even so, I hold that it comes from within me and not without. It does not matter whether the person is alive or dead.

*August 4.* The human spirit dislikes, perhaps rightly, to admit failure, and theatrical managers in particular are always full of reasons why a play, whether good or bad, has failed. A heat-wave keeps people out of the theatre, a cold snap keeps them at home, while a coal or general strike sends them into the streets. I am persuaded that a great many theatrical failures could be prevented by the engagement of a play-taster. The kind of individual I have in mind should be totally unconnected with the theatre, in whose atmosphere of back-scratching and mutual adulation it is impossible to preserve any sanity of judgment. My play-taster would be invited to step boldly forth and declare without fear or favour that a play is too dull and too long, an actress too pretty and too stupid, and, above all, when a high-priced comedian is not being funny. Having given his opinion he should then be conveyed back to the inaccessible part of the country from which he was lured. His salary should be £10,000 a year, to which each of London's forty theatres should contribute equally. Such a person would save theatres hundreds of thousands of pounds. After a recent first-night flop the manager came forward and told us that the piece had been highly successful during a seven-weeks' preliminary tour in the provinces, from which he had deduced that it would be successful in town. That is exactly where my play-taster would come in. He would know that a London audience resents being bored, whereas a country audience likes it. The point is that whereas it is difficult to find a play that is duller than any provincial city after dark, it is difficult to find a theatrical piece which is livelier than London's streets. There are a hundred reasons why in London one should never enter a theatre. The case is entirely different in towns like Preston and Portsmouth, where for sole distraction about nine o'clock a tram passes.

Came to Southend because it is healthy and cheap and I have delightful memories of the golf at Thorpe Bay. Motored this morning to Burnham-on-Crouch. Half-way was a sign-post. One arm said "Burnham-on-Crouch". Another arm, at right angles, said "Burnham". It appears they are both

the same place. How this would have annoyed A. B. ! Saw a work-shop with the inscription :

T. Wilkinson.  
Wheelwright and Undertaker.  
Motor bodies repaired.

But not a word about the other sort.

Passed through Battlesbridge, that wonderful little surprise. Here, in the middle of the countryside and without any thought of water in your mind, you suddenly become aware of a sailing ship, a river, and everything nautical. Weighed myself and found that owing to abstinence from bread and potatoes I have lost eight pounds in a month. I now weigh 13.12½.

Golf this afternoon, and played some mashie shots correctly for the first time in my golfing career. One must transfer the weight from right foot to left in course of stroke and so get the right rhythm. Anything else is a punch or a scuffle. Had a good round of 76 gross last night and halved match with young Winsor. Lost to-day by 3 and 1, always in receipt of the usual 5 bisques. Winsor goes round in an average of 70 or just under. Wrote up this diary and am now going to bed very tired.

*August 9.* May as well go on with the golfing history of this holiday. On Friday last Winsor went round in 69, beating me 1 up. On Sunday I made up a 4 ball with some club fogeys and played badly. On Monday, that is yesterday, Denny, the young pro. here, challenged his assistant and me, saying he would give us a bisque. Bogey of the course which is just under 6,000 yards is 76 ; par is 72. The scores were, Denny 64, Winsor 67, Agate 75.

We took our bisque at the 14th to become 2 up, lost the 15th (1 up), halved the 16th (1 up) and halved the 17th to become dormy. Winsor and I both drove wide of the green at the last hole and could not do better than a 4. Denny drove into a bunker, played a marvellous explosion shot out and rammed down a 14-foot putt to halve the match as cool as a cucumber. This young man will go far if his over-

confidence does not ruin him. Winsor has not the physique to become first-class, but he is a pretty little player and has taught me a lot. I used to get near the pin in the wrong way, and now fail to find the green in the best possible style.

Leo Pavia came down for a day or two and told me that his Concert Fantasy on Johann Strauss's *Fledermaus* for two pianos is to be performed this autumn by Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson. The old thing is as witty as ever without losing any of his malice. Has a new story about a Jew who on the day of his wife's funeral was found kissing the cook. On being remonstrated with, said, "In my grief should I know what I do?" Admits to being a good enemy but a dangerous friend. It is wonderful how he responds to the slightest kindness or attention, particularly if it includes a good bottle of Burgundy. He reminded me at dinner to-night that his grandmother was sister to Sarah Bernhardt's mother. As Leo is a Dutch-Italian Jew of Spanish extraction, the child of parents born in Venice and Amsterdam, and educated in Vienna, I am inclined to believe he speaks the truth, at any rate about this relationship with Sarah.

*August 11.* Another heat-wave. Second hottest day in five years. Played golf at Orsett, between here and London. The course is first-class, made for long hitters and well laid out by Braid, except that at the short holes the bunkers at the back of the green are too close, and when the ground is hard it is impossible to get near the pin and stop. Took 5 bisques from Winsor and won by 6 and 5. First win at these odds for 3 weeks. In the evening played in a 4-ball match with Winsor against local pro. and another amateur. Halved match. Grand breeze blowing all day and kept quite cool.

*August 12.* A lot happened to-day.

My article on Southend appeared in *D.E.* Terrible commotion. Pier-master rang up before breakfast, i.e. my breakfast, conferring upon me the freedom of the pier for the rest of my stay. I suppose I pitched the note a bit high, for unless I had golf I should not stay here half a day. It



is young Winsor who keeps me here ; he is immensely keen and I enjoy our matches enormously. He senses my infatuation with the game and we spend hours discussing the balance and rhythm of clubs. Apart from golf Southend is exactly like its reputation, and every evening the trippers leave behind them a faint odour of stale perspiration and decaying food. Yet essentially the sentiment in my article is sincere—about the poor enjoying themselves with the implication of their right to enjoyment. Anyhow, the thing is a very artful piece of journalism, and the hotel staff now regard me as a god. Very pleasant.

Correspondence with G. B. S. about reprinting one of his articles in my *Anthology of Dramatic Criticism*. G. B. S. quite agreeable, on condition that if the book makes a profit the publisher sends a contribution to the Society of Authors.

Motored up to London. The evening papers are full of the shocking news of the death of young Ronald Mackenzie, the author of *Musical Chairs*. He has been killed in a motor-car accident at Beauvais, France. He was twenty-nine. Whether we have lost a great dramatist or not we shall never know. His play reads poorly, which makes me think that he owed a tremendous lot to Komisarjevsky who produced it, and to his actors, notably Frank Vosper. The crib from Tchekov at the end makes me wonder how good he really was. By the way, I made a *fearful howler* in calling it “the best first play for forty years”. I had forgotten Synge, and Sean O’Casey, and McEvoy’s *David Ballard*.

The papers very full of yesterday’s heat and the terrific storm which broke over London in the night. Over 100,000 panes of glass in a tomato forcing-house broken by hail-stones. Was made very indignant by a photo showing the Suffolks, who have replaced the Guards gone to Pirbright, parading at St. James’s Palace in overcoats with packs ! Monstrous !

Have got a rod in pickle for Master Alan Dent. The Anthology, which was to be of 120,000 words, runs out at 157,000. I have never known A. D. make a mistake of this kind before, and he would be very angry if I exercised any check on him in this sort of matter which he looks upon as his province entirely. I cut the 37,000 words in 20 minutes.

1932]

I LIE ON IT

Arrived back here I found a letter from the Publicity Department of Southend thanking me for my article and enclosing copy of a manifesto about me sent to the *D.E.* I suppose I ought really to have bargained with them for £200 on condition that the article appeared. Alas, I am not a grafter !

While I think of it let me give a note on gumming, of which I have done a good deal lately. Use a large table with plenty of space. Have a pile of old newspapers on your left hand and tear off a sheet each time so as always to have a clean surface to gum on. Gum sparsely in the middle but plentifully at the edges and corners. Leave a minute or so to get "tacky" and then freshen up edges and corners. Squee-gee with plenty of clean blotting-paper. Wash your hands frequently and leave the book to dry standing up and open. Do not put the book away closed, or the remaining leaves will be found crinkled by the damp, and difficult to write on. I may be an indifferent writer, but I am the best gummer in England !

Graceful exchange of courtesies on the birth to Cedric Hardwicke of a son and heir :

ME (*by wire*). "Best wishes for your son's first night, and may he run 100 years !"

CEDRIC (*by p.c.*). "Many thanks. It is the only rôle so far in which I have completely satisfied myself and *all critics* !"

This to Max :

*Palace Hotel,  
Southend-on-Sea.  
16th August, 1932.*

DEAR MR. BEERBOHM,

I do not know whether modern politeness insists upon bad handwriting instead of good typing. If it does it is wrong.

To come at once to the business of this letter. I have made, and Mr. Arthur Barker hopes to publish in the autumn, a book called *The English Dramatic Critics*, being an anthology of dramatic criticism from 1660 to the present day.

Will you permit me to take two extracts from your work ? I have chosen two articles which were cut out from the *Saturday Review* as they appeared and were pasted into my

scrap-book by me as a young man. I now call myself "youngish". I am not going to pretend that I have searched further, as both seem to me to be perfect and I am sentimentally attached to both. One article is entitled "A Great Dear" and is, of course, about Ellen Terry. The other is about Hedda Gabler. I particularly want to include this, because it proves you to have been the only critic not over-gammoned by Duse. I am even alluding to this fact in my preface.

There will doubtless be some sordid business of copyright fees, and in this matter Shaw bestrides my path like a hoary-headed, semi-benevolent dragon. I shall, I think, dodge more or less decently between his legs. In any case I feel that such details are not for fine spirits like you and possibly me, and with your consent we will leave them to our respective publishers.

Yours sincerely,  
JAMES AGATE.

On Monday motored over to Frinton.

Lunched with Edward Robey, George's son, who lives with his mother, formerly Ethel Haydon, and sisters. This half of the family has taken a bungalow at F. for the summer. Mrs. R. a very, very nice woman and I can get on with her and her kind. I had not met her for five minutes before we were discussing "that full feeling" after meals.

The golf at Frinton was wretched. Myself and three rabbits, one of whom, the son of a millionaire, held up the course till I was ashamed. I suppose he is a rich young man; anyhow he was completely indifferent to the fact that he was ruining everybody's afternoon on the course.

Dined late and well at the Saracen's Head at Chelmsford. Cold duck and a pint of Ayala. Recalled for no reason Mark Hambourg saying to me of a well-known singer: "The finest Elijah in the world, dear boy. But what a pity he plays Bridge like Elijah!"

The valet who looks after me here told me this morning that he nearly fainted yesterday when getting out of bed. "It's through not seeing no doctor since a year last April. *Not seeing no doctor always makes you run down.*"

Postcard from G. B. S. about the Anthology ends with the

sentence : "Most of the notices of my new play seem to have been written by superannuated dancing partners from the Riviera."

Terrific golf match this evening. Young Winsor and myself v. Denny and a man called Notley. Card for the best-ball score :

4	3	2	4	3	3	3	4	3	= 29
2	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	= 26
									—
									<u>55</u>

My own score was 72, my best anywhere ever, and the two 2's in the second half were mine ! I know the course is short. But the fact remains that the professional competition record is 68.<sup>1</sup>

*August 18.* The filthy heat-wave continues—the worst in this country since 1911. Temperature in the shade 96°.

Motored to Burnham-on-Crouch and so sick of alleged hot-weather foods and drinks that I made my lunch of *hot* pea soup, *hot* roast beef, and *hot* treacle tart. Felt extremely well and cool afterwards. Went for two hours' motor-boat trip, as far as the sea and back. Delicious ! As Julia Mills might have remarked, "Isn't all life a journey to the open sea and back ? Query : Why 'open' ? J. M." The little trip put me in mind of the end of *Tono-Bungay*, in my opinion the finest last chapter in fiction.

Four-ball match with Monty and the two pros. in the evening. Had to run round the last five holes on account of light,

<sup>1</sup> Every hole was holed out. I maintain that this is a remarkable score. Allowing for two holes of close on 500 yards, which may be reasonably called 5's, twelve 2-shot holes and four 1-shotters, the par of the course must be 70. Inasmuch as the man called Notley hit two terrific shots at the two long holes and got down in a single putt, the score was the best possible, except at the first and sixth holes where two putts were taken. Every other green was reached either in one shot or two, and on sixteen of them somebody only took one putt.

A notice of the feat appeared in a Southend newspaper but nowhere else, though I should have liked word of it, not as a feat but as an extraordinary succession of flukes, in either *The Times* or *Country Life*. I did whisper the matter to Bernard Darwin, but must take it that that August Ear was not bent sufficiently low. Had its owner been one of the fortunate participators I feel that there would have been a dance on the last green and considerable song about it afterwards.

and so more than a bit careless after partner had won or halved hole. My actual score 75, but a *moral* 73.

*August 19.* The ordinary playgoer is semi-articulate. He will tell you that a play is "dreadful" and leave you to guess whether he means (a) that being socially below dinner-jacket level it does not interest him, and he is therefore not concerned with the accuracy or dramatic value of its observation, or (b) that the white-tie level being reached the piece would interest him if it were not that the plot is stupid and the characterisation feeble. This is like a traveller from a new country who should tell you that he found the climate "awful" without saying whether it was too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry.

Motored from Southend to Aldeburgh to see what it's like and if we could get rooms to finish the month. Grand course, to look at, rather frigid professional's shop—Sherlock's young man thinks the assistant would give me evening games if it doesn't interfere with his two evenings a week off—and no rooms to be had. Arrived at Broadcasting House with twenty minutes to spare. Left Southend at 11.45; got to Aldeburgh; arrived B.B.C. 6.50. Not bad going for a little Riley, and rather cheeky to go to Aldeburgh at all with a public engagement in the evening! Bought a paper at Ilford with news of Mollison's landing.

Broadcast extremely badly and was seized with the notion that I had delivered the talk before. I wonder whether the article from which it was made was originally a broadcast talk? And even that, said Ernest Fenton, was probably *née Sunday Times*. Fenton is Leo Pavia's bosom pal; i.e. they have been each other's hair-shirt for forty years. You never know whether they are on David and Jonathan's terms, or Cain and Abel's.

*August 20.* Slept at 74 Kensington Gardens Square, which continues to feel like somebody else's flat. The floor of the entrance hall thick with bills, writs, etc., so that I could hardly open the door. Nearly destroyed an offensive-looking missive from the Post Office, but eventually opening

it found it to contain £3, refund of deposit at Beaconsfield. Letter from the Bank, "more in sorrow than in anger". Fortunately the telephone had been cut off owing to account not being paid, so no creditor could dun me that way!

Ernest Fenton stayed here to keep me company, Elliott having gone home. Ernest looks more than ever like a Tree in ruins, and indeed it is a long time since he was one of the six young men in the "Tell me, pretty maiden" chorus in *Florodora*.

Letter from Allan Monkhouse *re* the Anthology. I feel I should like to write a little book about this very great man, to whom everybody who has ever known him pays homage. Six foot. Like a Cumberland fell, noble and commanding. For years a pillar of moral example, sanity and fun. Writes with reservations which make Henry James, at his most tenuous and crepuscular, blatant by comparison. His first novel *A Deliverance* is one of the loveliest and most delicate things in fiction, but of a greyness! Nobody who does not know Monkhouse can get through a book by him—though he tells a story of an Indian fakir, encountered in a train in India by his sister two years running, and who on each occasion was reading one of A. N. M.'s novels. "And a different one, my boy!" Despises London and has always refused to see that no writer who sticks to the provinces can succeed as the vulgar rate success.

Monkhouse has been an invalid now for a good many years, but still maintains serenity and all his old sense of humour. He writes that he is "an old gentleman of 74; a little bored, but it is summer weather". A. B. says of him in the Diary, under date Dec. 4th, 1910: "Monkhouse, a large grave man, slow-speaking with an extraordinary sedate and sincere charm." Once, when A. N. M. was ill, his friends proposed to club together and give him a motor-car. He refused. I proposed to James Bone that on A. N. M.'s 70th birthday we should found a Book Prize at Rugby to be called after his son, Paddy. He wouldn't have that, but would accept a letter signed by his friends. Bone agreed to this, and then forgot me, the initiator of the whole idea. However, I signed afterwards.

With the letter came Monkhouse's latest play.

I cannot see a West-End audience making much of it. Coward wrote a similar play, or rather a play with a similar theme, in which the heroine—called Larita or some such name—spent the morning in a green frock and the drawing-room of a country house reading Proust's *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, and when the house-party wanted her to make a fourth at tennis told them to go to hell in a tirade two pages long. In the next act she had another and longer tirade *on a staircase* and wearing a frock that would have been remarkable at the Folies-Bergère. This is what our public likes, and I cannot see it taking to A. N. M.'s plays any more than it did to Henry James's.

The stage indications to this play show how far Monkhouse is from the theatre of flesh-and-blood stardom.

CECILIA comes in, HELENA holding her arm. MARY and GUY trail behind them. CECILIA might have made a brave entrance, but HELENA's greeting has disconcerted her. To assert herself now would be like pushing at an open door. Her hesitation helps her, and ROBERT is puzzled. Is it possible that after all—?

What is an actress to make of such an entry? Every star has only one object in view at her first appearance, and that is to push open every conceivable door as wide as Heaven itself. Duse was the exception, and I do not think that even she would have consented to make her first entry with her arms pinioned!

I note that my old friend still keeps his humour. His letter has this passage: "Cecilia is not one of my great plays: I thought I would write a *part* for an actress. Who would do it, I wonder? I still write plays and I do believe they're better than those of some young bloods who draw the town. But there isn't a market. Never mind. Brighthouse assures me that H. A. Jones left behind him 150 unacted plays. There's a solemn thought for you." Of all the fine things I know about A. N. M. I think this is the finest. For years he had a habit of slipping out of the house at nine o'clock every evening and returning at ten. One day he explained that he had a father living in a cottage at the bottom of the garden, that the old man was half blind and wholly bed-ridden and

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I LIE ON IT

that every evening he read to him out of the Waverley Novels. "We are half-way through," he said ruefully, "for the second time !"

Took up *Punch* which I had not seen for weeks. I found this :

From *Punch*. August 17th, 1932

### POLISHED AGATE

(With acknowledgments to Mr. James Agate's weekly displays of erudition, cleverly disguised as dramatic criticism, in the "Sunday Times".

It is recorded by CASIMIR DELAVIGNE of the inhabitants of Limbo that they never weep—

Mais aussi leur rire jamais  
N'est qu'un sourire.

From this, I think, we may safely conclude that they never witnessed the performance of *Sez You!* at the Hoxton Odeum. If "Goldie" was correct in deducing mental vacancy from sonority of cachinnation, then my mind and those of my fellow-spectators must have been perilously close to that vacuum which we are told that Nature, unlike suburban housewives, abhors. BERGSON no doubt has several passages on the character of laughter which would come in well here, but as my copy at the moment is upstairs by my bedside I will defer the trouble of looking them up to a more pressing emergency.

What was it all about? I can only reply in the words of old *Kaspar*, the most famous and most fatuous of agnostics, "Nay, that I cannot tell." I find on my programme against the name of Bert Boko a reference to THEOPHILE GAUTIER. "Thy exquisite reason, dear knight?" Why, his reminder—the citation is perhaps a trifle hackneyed, but, once more to quote *Sir Toby*, "what of that?"—

Tout passe. L'art robuste  
Seul a l'éternité.

And how magnificently robust Bert Boko's art is! It has the torose muscularity of MONET's peasants or the Farnese Hercules. In his hands the rathe-ripe cheese takes on not merely comic but cosmic qualities, the *passé* domestic kipper



becomes Leviathan and the vaguely Æschylean figure of "mother-in-law" is terrible as an army with banners. In the familiar words of old FULLER, "Here be no nice quillies and quiddities, no wanton whim-whams nor subtil fission of fine hairs," but, as BALBUS wrote to CÆSAR of the acting of ROSCIUS, "*Hoec est edepol materies militibus danda.*"

After the joint the sorbet; after the burliness of Boko the sprightliness of Susie and Sally, the Sisters Swan, refined comedy duo, a living refutation of the Shakespearean axiom that "two stars keep not their motion in one sphere". Had PROUST but known them how unqualified would have been his preference for "*Du Côté de Chez Swan*"! As I watched I found myself murmuring with CHARLES D'ORLEANS

Allez-vous-en, allez, allez,  
Soussi, Soing et Merencolie;

only while Soing and Merencolie depart I would have Susie (and Sally) eternally stay. LAMB says somewhere—but perhaps my readers have had enough of LAMB. It is not everyone who shares MARY's oviphilous tastes, and *toujours agneau* may well become as monotonous as *toujours perdrix*.

One of the ways in which taste has changed most is in the attitude towards quotation. Montaigne has a passage about those authors "who, amidst their trivial compositions, intermingle and wrest in whole sentences taken from ancient authors, supposing by such filching-theft to purchase honour and reputation to themselves, doe cleane contrarie. For this infinite varietie and dissemblance of lustres make a face so wan, so il-favored, and so ugly, in respect of theirs, that they lose much more than gaine thereby". Yet was there ever any other who quoted more than Montaigne? I suppose that his borrowings make up more than one-tenth of his total matter. Bacon in his *Essays* has 131 quotations from the Latin alone. Hazlitt . . . But then I could go on and cite any number of great quoters.

The modern attitude is, I suppose, something like this: "I want to know what James Agate thinks about this new play. Is it good or bad or just indifferent? Is it worth my while to see it? I do not want to know what Balzac thought about Talma, or whether he did or didn't see him. I don't

want any second-hand opinions from Lessing or Lemaître or Lewes. I have these authors on my bookshelves and can take them down if I want. [This is a lie—they haven't and they can't !] I don't want to read what Agate thinks is fine writing any more than I want fine writing from a tipster who is going to tell me what will win the 3.30. I want Agate to tell me without embellishments whether last night's play did or did not win the 8.30 ! ”

My answer is this : “ You cannot dispose of a play by saying that it is either rotten or not rotten. A piece of writing by a playwright calls for a piece of writing by the critic. By this I do not mean fine writing, and the reason why all my life I have been so liberal in quotation has nothing to do with embellishment. The first object in writing is to impart information, and when I quote, it is because I desire to get into the reader's head something which is not there. The reader who remembers the lines :

Against the blown rose may they stop their nose  
That kneel'd unto the buds

must lump the old thing being shoved down his throat again for the sake of the ninety-nine readers who do not know it, who haven't a Shakespeare handy, who wouldn't know where to look for the passage if they had, and who with the help of it will better grasp whatever point I am making.

There is a passage about *King Lear* which I have quoted *ad nauseam* and shall continue to quote though people nauseate me for it. In one scale is the informed reader's scorn at having the old thing trotted out again ; in the other is the amazed delight of ninety-nine other readers making acquaintance with it for the first time. It is a passage from Karl von Holtei's *Reminiscences* and runs as follows :

Devrient played with overwhelming, violent exaltation ; it seemed to me that the emptiness of the house spurred him on to exert himself trebly, in sheer defiance. After the second act there was a long wait. At last the stage-manager came before the curtain, and informed the small audience that Herr Devrient had fallen down in a fit, and was quite unable to go on acting. The evening's performance must

therefore unavoidably be considered at an end. The audience left quietly. I ran about in the street outside, driven by a deadly fear, keeping my eyes on the door by which the actors went out and in . . . At last they brought him out, still dressed, in part, in the old king's costume. It was a strange scene. The disordered clothing, the pale face, the bright daylight . . . It was as if they were carrying a dead man from the battle-field.

Jock says that this occurs in at least eleven of my twenty-two books, and I say that if I write twenty-two more it will re-occur in exactly half of them.

And then I am sick of those carpers who say : " Yes, James, it's all very well for Bacon and Montaigne. But they're different ! " Now what do they mean by " different " ? They mean, of course, that Bacon and Montaigne are better writers than I am, which should make them all the more annoyed at being fobbed off by quotations in these better writers. Why should they insist upon having the whole of, and nothing but, the infinitely poorer me ?

I think the libraries have something to do with it. Having inherited a Montaigne or got it from The Times Book Club they don't mind if he quotes. But when they have paid with an actual twopence for the *Sunday Times*, they want their twopence-worth of original writing and feel themselves defrauded whenever they see a quotation. " We've paid money to have this fellow sweat his intellectual guts out, and sweat he shall ! " I believe they calculate this to six places of decimals !

Spent the afternoon on the Diary and, the heat continuing to be most oppressive, went down to the bottom of Villiers Street to listen to the Police Band playing in the gardens. The crowd was remarkable, as all crowds are, and should have been painted by a Frenchman. Odd contrast—the street full of pimps and prostitutes with their bullies, black-mailers, the noisy railway, the trams on the Embankment and, of course, Somebody's Ballet Egyptien. The band played atrociously. Perhaps police perform better on point than on counterpoint. Very bad dinner. Tepid round of beef, lukewarm and slightly corked Krug, replaced by an indifferent

pint of Bollinger N.V. Slight thunderstorm in the middle of which I went to bed and slept well.

*August 21.* While I was dressing I decided to live permanently at Southend, in a suite of rooms—i.e. bedroom and sitting-room—in this hotel, the Palace. This enables me to get rid of Alfred Lester, who won't want to leave his place in London and bring his wife here. I can't stand the loneliness of my flat, where the company is either Alfred Lester or none. What can I do when I have spare evenings in London? Theatre and cinema are equally impossible, for that is my work, and I can't read for the same reason. If I want to go to a concert they are always playing Beethoven No. 5 or Tschaiowsky's No. 6 which is worse. Am sick to death of both. The result would have to be either pub-crawling or debauchery, and my health won't stand either. I firmly believe that another twelve months in London like the last would throw me out of commission altogether. I have a hell of a lot of work in front of me this winter, and the health I get here will enable me to cope with it. I may also save money this way. Anyhow I have decided to try it. I shall keep the flat on, so as to have a *pied-à-terre* in London for work at extra-busy times. Jock is in Normandy and I suppose there will be a rumpus about the new arrangements. Will Mrs. Micawber now desert Mr. Micawber? I wish Jock would learn some kind of shorthand. I dictated my article to-day to a young woman from one of the many type-writing offices, an intelligent person who can go as fast as I can. Result 1,600 words in just over the hour, whereas Jock would have taken two hours. This is a terrible strain on my patience which he never seems to perceive. All the same I don't want him to throw up his job. He will probably indulge in high, middling, and finally low dudgeon for three consecutive days and then be all right again. I shall have my way, whatever his attitude.

Apropos of nothing I heard this to-day :

Mrs. Campbell, on being asked what she thought of some other actress's Paula Tanqueray, said "Paula was always a lady !"

Now that I am coming to live down here I register a vow

not to make any entries of my matches with Winsor. Unless, of course, something remarkable occurs as when, this evening, he laid me three dead stymies in the first 8 holes, going round in 71 and winning the match by 3 and 2, but at 5 bisques instead of 6. Much cooler to-night and a small gale blowing.

*August 23.* Very busy day.

Pulled up blind to see the tide in, the pier glistening in the sun and the little boats as magical as if they were in a picture by Canaletto.

Chose my *suite of rooms* here. That means sitting-room (magnificent) and bedroom (fair). First floor with view of sea, in fact facing it. Five guineas a week, to include rooms, service, light, heating, baths and breakfast. Table d'hôte luncheon, when taken, 3/-. Dinner 4/3. Percentage off wines. Very reasonable. Propose to give £4 a month in tips for the entire staff.

Engaged new chauffeur. Aged 19, modest, cheerful, not unlike Traddles to look at, and anxious to please. Can drive fairly well, but a bit nervous with me in the car ; drives better when I am not in it. This is natural. Elliott says that in a week he won't know or care whether he is driving me or the Queen of Sheba. Dictated letters from 12 o'clock till 6, with short interval for lunch. Intelligent local typist looks as though she had come out of a novel by Osbert Sitwell. Now and then flashes a bright smile at me most agreeably. Wrote Jock asking whether he will consent to Southend. Also wrote sacking Alfred Lester—a job I hate. Also letter to Bank, pretending that I take a comfortable view of their last communication. Lots of letters to lots of other people, and I am supposed to be on holiday.

When I was in town this week-end I discovered a beautiful Panama hat, never worn, two pairs of lovely flannel bags, never worn, a blazer very slightly moth-eaten, and some white socks. All bought against some summer holiday when it snowed or I didn't go away to where this regalia could be worn. Put them all on for lunch to-day (except Panama). Discovered white shoes had been stolen, or disappeared, so went into the town to buy some, but could discover nothing



*Jimmy W. 1st*



better than a 5/6 canvas pair with snub-nose toe-caps. Have sent to London for something and in the meantime hope my Mexican bedroom slippers will be considered the latest thing in chic! In this costume I corrected proofs of *D.E.* book article. Rather pleased with: "Mr. Frank Swinnerton has many claims to distinction, the most pointed of which is his beard." Violently untrue, of course, but I simply can't resist this sort of thing. He is very nearly the best and is certainly the sanest literary critic now going.

Have just read that the second volume of A. B.'s *Journals* is to come out this autumn. I always suspected him of thinking me very small beer. If this view finds confirmation in the next instalment my devotion to him and my allegiance will not be in any way affected. I feel so sure of this that I do not need to use emphasis.

Two more examples of the complete slipshodness of the present generation. (1) When Baldwin tried to sign the agreement reached in the Ottawa convention there was no ink in the inkpot and everybody had to wait while some was fetched. (2) And hardly less important, is that Arthur Barker writes to say that he has lost the Introduction to my Anthology.

*August 24.* New golf clubs arrived, being a specially matched set by Nicoll, of Leven, to my order. Ecstasy!

*August 25.* Fearfully depressed late yesterday and was terribly afraid it was nerves. This morning a good, old-fashioned liver attack declares itself, whereby I am much comforted. Barker has found my preface.

An example of how carelessly people read. Reviewing Smythe's book, *Kamet Conquered*, I quoted Johnson's remark about the first balloonist: "We now know a method of mounting into the air and are, I think, not likely to know more. For myself I would rather find a cure to ease an asthma." To-day comes a letter from a woman writing in an educated handwriting and from a good address in Rugby: "Sir, in to-day's *Daily Express* you say you would like to find a cure for asthma . . ."



Had a golf-lesson to-day and discovered that I have been playing my iron-shots all wrong for twenty years—all arm and body instead of wrists. Am determined to begin again, if it knocks my handicap back to 24, which it will. Absurd for a man of my age to take this *passionate* interest in a game !

My liver-attack is now taking the grand offensive. Shall counter with *two* blue pills and bed.

*August 26.* I foresee that one of the difficulties about living here is going to be the correction of proofs. I know no human being who is to be trusted with commas, the more virulent form of this disease being to put them in unnecessarily.

The post brought Jock's answer :

4 *The Broadway,*  
*Old Beaconsfield, Bucks.*

*25th August, 1932.*

"Thank you," said Mrs. Micawber. "That is quite sufficient. If such is the case, and Mr. Micawber forfeits no privilege by entering upon this project, my anxiety is set at rest. I speak," said Mrs. Micawber, "as a female, necessarily ; but I have always been of opinion that Mr. Micawber possesses what I have heard of my papa call, when I lived at home, the judicial mind ; and I hope Mr. Micawber is now entering on a field where that mind will develop itself, and take a still more commanding station."

*Chap. XXXVI.*

There was a good deal more about whether I could really afford to live here, and then this :

I didn't go out of the country after all. I walked to Canterbury—with spotty cowl ! Curiously enough, too, I was *off* Southend. I went in a steamer called the *Medway Queen* to Clacton one day, and to my surprise we touched the tip of Southend's immoderate pier.

By the way, don't be too summary about discharging Alfred Lester : be gracious about it—a good quiet servant.

"Southend's *immoderate* pier." Here I put my finger on the

reason for *Gemel's* failure. The average reader simply cannot abide such adjectives as "immoderate".

*August 27.* Letter from Jock saying he was taken last night to King Edward VII Hospital, Windsor, and is to be operated on before morning for appendicitis. Confesses to feeling "a little scared". Characteristic that I can be more philosophic about other people's major troubles than about my own minor ones. I feel quite confident that Jock will be all right. Very tedious of Mrs. Micawber to want a Cæsarian operation just when Mr. M. is about to get busy. Shall have to continue with present amanuensis—very agreeable, skittish and eager to be helpful.

Gladys Cooper at her best last night. Tremendously competent as ever. The piece—*Firebird*, by some unrememberable Hungarian, Lajos Zilahy—was adapted by Jeffrey Dell, the adapter of *Payment Deferred*. As I was entering the theatre Dell rushed up to say that they had sold *Payment Deferred* to Metro-Goldwyn for Charles Laughton. Price 20,000 dollars. If this is true I make either £250 or £500 according to the terms of my contract, which I forget. I also read this in to-night's *Evening News*. But in view of absence of news from Peters am more than sceptical. These strokes of luck do not happen to me, and I shall not build on this one. I shall not ask Peters, being a firm addict of the ostrich policy in good news as well as bad. Nevertheless, I *did* find a black cat on my bed last night. A *small* black cat.

'Phone news about Jock excellent.

*August 28.* News about Jock still A 1. Am going over to-morrow. Too busy to-day on book article for *D.E.* I always try very hard when Jock is away or ill. It annoys him, and proves to me that I am not utterly dependent on somebody else, which I should hate.

Received charming letter from Max yesterday, which means that I must have another look at his two volumes of criticism. I confess to having made my selection out of the two old articles kept by me for years in my cutting-book. This was lazy and not fair to Max. Have advised Barker.

EGO

Villino Chiaro,  
Rapallo, Italy.  
August 25th, 1932.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

Well—yes—by all means—if those two articles really are good ones? I don't remember at all what they were like. But I'm ready to take your word for it that they wouldn't shame me.

Neither of them has appeared in a book. In a limited edition of my books there were 2 vols. of dramatic criticism; and later these 2 were brought out in America publicly: *Around Theatres* (Knopf). But neither of the articles that you desire was included.

I look forward to the book—though I shall doubtless wish, as I read it, that it were all written by you.

I can imagine that G. B. S. has been very thorough with his home-made contracts, etc. Such things are to him as her dolls are to a little girl. But the fact remains that he is an old man and ought to be making his soul. I am making mine; but as no publisher can step in to do my business in this instance, I suppose I had better say to Mr. Arthur Barker (who wrote to me at the same time as you) that a fee of £5 would keep me quiet—and happy.

Yours sincerely,

MAX BEERBOHM.

Sept. 3. A busy week.

On Monday motored to Windsor and found Jock unexpectedly comfortable and cheerful. Complained, however, of the gruesomeness of the place. The man in the next bed but one had a badly fractured leg, and had spent the night *laughing* in agony. While I was there they took an old man out of bed and into the operating theatre. No fuss, just as I suppose there isn't any when a man is going to be hanged. The old man didn't seem to mind very much; he was so much skin and bone there didn't seem to be anything to operate on.

Saw the Laughton-Tallulah film at the Carlton called *Devil and the Deep*. Charles has been made to look handsome, but thinning has made Tallulah a shade care-worn.

Tuesday. All right about *Payment Deferred*. Jock gave me a shock the day before by saying Peters had told him

there would be "about £100" for me, but that in view of my extravagance I was not to be told. However, I opened the subject. It now seems that the amount is as follows. Sale of film 20,000 dollars, roughly £5,000. Of this Gilbert Miller bags half, leaving £2,800 to be divided between Forester and Dell, and as I get 20% of Dell's share that means £280 to me, say a round £250 after paying Peters' commission.

Perhaps, lest I be suspected of venality, I had better put down why I should get anything at all. It happened like this. Going to Paris with Monty some four years ago I read Forester's novel *Payment Deferred* in the train, boat and again train, and stayed in my bedroom at the hotel without dinner until I had finished it. I *immediately* saw Laughton in the part, and proposed the adaptation to at least half-a-dozen playwrights and playwright-hacks including (I think) Knoblock, Beverley Nichols and Van Druten and (I am sure) Monckton Hoffe. Nobody in the least interested. Then I worried Peters so much that he ultimately found Dell and persuaded him to tackle the job. The play being made and me satisfied—though I had to insist on some alterations and the point of the whole thing being rammed more firmly home—then came the bother of persuading first Laughton and then the managers. Charles was very good about it and he did not give me more than a year's trouble. Managers just weren't interested. One night in December, of I forget what year, I thought it was all fixed. Charles, Elsa Lanchester and I all got together at the Vernons'. Frank Vernon wanted to make a highbrow thing of it with significant lighting and all that. I wanted Brixton realism for this tale of a commonplace if murderous bank-clerk, and Virginia Vernon, who is a woman of sense as well as vivacity and charm, agreed with me. Anyhow they promised to do it the following May. Next morning they wouldn't do it till November, so I called the whole thing off. I had taken the thing so much under my wing that everybody regarded it as my play. Alec Rea was afraid of it, Basil Dean kept saying he wanted to look at it, but I was shy of his magnoperative preoccupation elsewhere, and at last I tried Edgar Wallace. Edgar said he would do the play if I would

put everybody into evening dress. Finally Gilbert Miller took the thing and produced it with moderate success. The critics almost without exception behaved like idiots. What is it Max says about dramatic critics? Something to the effect that they are a very fine body of men "like the Metropolitan Police Force". And with about as many brains! The highbrow kind said the play wasn't poetic tragedy or something of the sort, and the others thought it was sordid. Of course it was sordid; that was the entire point. Sordid, and not sentimental. God, what fools! I took care not to criticise the play at all, and Rees sent his assistant, a brilliant young woman who wrote a ladylike, sniffy notice. Anyhow the thing is now sold, and should, I think, make a good film.

*Wednesday.* Wrote first of resumed *Tatler* articles. Took a lot of pains with it and rather good, I think.

Letter from Leo with this passage :

Which reminds me of my favourite story of you. Once I was in great trouble—something domestic, no doubt. Coming for sympathy and advice I found you in the throes of your weekly article for the *Saturday*, biting your pencil and saying, "I can't find the right adjective for this sentence. What I've got doesn't seem to fit. Can you think of something better?" I made a suggestion which was received with rapture and adopted. You then said, "Come on, Leo, out with it!" I began, and your face assumed that benign smile which it wears when you are interested or amused. On I went, not noticing that your smile waned and was replaced by a look of worry. Finished, I said, "Well, Jimmie!" and waited, and waited. Presently, coming out of a dream, you said, "I *was* right. That first adjective will have to go back!"

*Thursday and Friday.* Went up to town for theatres and broadcast. I refused to sit in Bennett's chair, partly out of veneration and partly through a dislike of dead men's shoes. The lighting in the studio is shocking, the table slippery, and the books lining the walls bogus—in fact every-

thing A. B. would most have detested. Yet they put his chair here.

Letter from Max. Shaw had insisted that all contributors to the Anthology should fall into line with him in the matter of the contribution to the Society of Authors in the case of a profit :

*Villino Chiaro,  
Rapallo,  
Italy.*

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

I flatly refuse to let G. B. S. meddle in my private affairs, illustrious and well-meaning though he is.

You will have received a letter that I wrote to you from the above address before starting for a hill village which my Wife and I are finding as hot as Rapallo, and less bracing. Now I want you to cancel from your mind, and to ask your Publisher to cancel from his, the terms that I suggested. I rather often receive, through the firm of Heinemann, requests for the right to include in anthologies this or that little thing of mine ; and in writing to you I named what is the least sum that Heinemann ever names on my behalf.

Your second letter (which reached me this morning) makes me feel that I was perhaps rather grasping. I hadn't realised that the book was so little likely to be lucrative ; nor that it was to be published on a "profit-sharing" basis. Hence the cancellisation (lovely word !) of my previous demand.

Let me be paid in just the same way as the other contributors. Or, rather, let me be credited with the same fee. Do you, please, intercept the actual cash and go with it straight out into the street and give it to the first man or woman or child whom (1) you like the look of and (2) whom you think hard-up and likely to be pleased and grateful. And say to him or her or it, "This comes to you from a non-Fabian being."

If you will promise, quite formally and seriously, to do this, and meanwhile to report my decision to G. B. S., I shall be satisfied. If you won't, then you can't have those two articles of mine.

Yours sincerely,

MAX BEERBOHM.

P.S. G. B. S. will be shocked perhaps. But that is just what I want him to be.

EGO

To this I replied as follows :

*Palace Hotel,  
Southend-on-Sea.  
3rd September, 1932.*

DEAR MR. MAX BEERBOHM,

Your letter to hand, and duly perused and digested. No, I did not ever think you were grasping, and Yes, I will carry out your instructions with this exception, that I do not propose to annoy G. B. S. by telling him about them until the book is safely out. I think it wise to let that sleeping dog lie ; he is quite likely to make so much fuss about safeguarding literature in general that a particular piece of letters cannot be produced, which seems to me to be excess of punctilio.

On another matter. You have made me wonder whether I have not been a little lazy in choosing two of your Essays for which I personally happen to have a sentimental fancy in view of their having adorned my cutting book for so many years. I have, therefore, sent for your two Vols. to make quite sure that they represent you as faithfully as any others could. If I decide upon a change, I will let you know. I believe and hope that the book is going to be a good one, and my faith in it is such that I am not seizing the occasion to foist upon the public a preliminary diatribe on the function of dramatic criticism. My very last desire is that this anthology should advertise me. It has been a labour of love, which means that I have expended the maximum of labour in return for the minimum of affection.

Yours sincerely,  
JAMES AGATE.

Letter from Jock this morning saying the wound not healing as quickly as it ought to. Says he feels like Shelley's Prometheus and ends with the statement that the Adagio in the Ninth Symphony "knocks Bach arse over tip". If Jock is going to be away long I shall have to look for a house here, as the hotel will be too dear for me and Elliott, and I cannot do without some sort of company. In addition the Riley 9 won't do for the continual journeying ; in my view this car with a drop-head coupé body is under-powered. Also owing to my getting thinner all my clothes are hanging on me and

the dress-suit is a disgrace. It looks as though *Payment Deferred* was very opportune.

The news in the paper suggests that the world is quite mad. Among to-day's headings I find : " 6,000 H.P. Racer (speed-boat) May Blow up To-day," and " Motor-Cycle Aces in Orgy of Speed. Death-defying Duels To-day." Well, well !

*Theatre Arts Monthly* for September arrived to-day. Contains a record of the London season taken from the reviews of the dramatic critics. I note five excerpts from Ivor Brown, three from Morgan, two from Darlington and one from C. B. Mortlock, while I am completely ignored. There was a time when this would have upset me, so I think I must be in better health.

Sept. 9. My birthday. 56. Nervy again and went to local doctor who read me the usual lecture on overwork. And I should jolly well think so ! Motored to White Roding to lunch with Peter Page at Colville Hall, which he has on a 44-year lease at £68 a year. The place, which was built in 1539, has Haddon Hall beaten to a frazzle and is unbelievably lovely. All through lunch I was half-expecting to see some film-director appear and yell : " All right, boys ! Take it away ! " The place is miles from anywhere, and even the Chelmsford yokels have never heard of the Rodings. Lovely names : Margaret Roding, Abbess Roding, Rambouillet Roding. How did this last place come by its name ? The natives pronounce Rambouillet " Rumbelly ". Peter keeps a visitors' book and at lunch looked me straight in the eye and without blinking talked of a Colonel Somebody " who marches with me ". I hadn't heard the word since Pinero. Peter very witty all day. Brought him back to Southend, dined at the Palace, motored to town where in his flat in Berkeley Street we talked about his great-grandfather Charles X until two in the morning, Peter wearing his ancestor's coat of flowered satin. This is the tale of Peter's that I find easiest to believe. He is the most charming and least tedious of all companions and I attribute his elaborations, always on unimportant matters, to his incurable romanticism.



Day before yesterday Elliott started an abscess in the jaw. I feel as the woman in H. H. Davies's *The Mollusc* would have felt if her secretary—Miss Roberts I think she was called—had had the impertinence to be ill. Yesterday Elliott was speechless with pain. Neither doctor nor dentist can do anything. Very wearing for me, but reflect that it is worse for him, poor fellow. Tried to conceal the irritation I cannot help feeling when other people are ill. Here am I in the throes of house-hunting, my work re-starting and two Miss Roberts out of action.

To-day Elliott was operated on. Took "Cranley" in Chalkwell Avenue, Westcliff, on a three-years' lease. Tried going up to town by train and found it much less tiring than motor-ing when the roads are greasy. Dined at the Savage Club and sat next to Tom Shaw who, apropos of nothing, suddenly said: "I have never hated anybody in my life. I have disliked people, meaning I could never get any pleasure out of their society, but I have never hated anybody." I told him Monkhouse's: "The worst of getting to know people thoroughly is that you cannot entirely hate them."

*Sept. 10.* The waiter asked me if I would like "rock salmon" for breakfast. I said firmly: "No!" Whereupon he said that in his opinion "rock salmon" is a "make-shift" fish. Elia, thou should'st be living at this hour!

*Sept. 11.* These typist-women infuriate me. Consider this. I dictated the following to a chit from Muswell Hill in a boot-cupboard off the Strand:

"I have a friend who suffers continually from the fear that he will one day, while boating on the Amazon, fall into the water and be swallowed by a crocodile, and he cannot decide whether death by suffocation or by mastication will be the more painful. I ask him whether he boats, even at Maidenhead. He says No. I ask him whether there is any chance of his being sent to South America. He again says No. I ask whether he would go if he were sent, and yet again he answers No, but accompanies the denial with a look of scorn indicating that I do not know the nature of an obsession."

This fiend in typist's clothing made me say I do not know the nature of an ALSATION! Am I not right in saying the entire world is incompetent? At least I never come across the other sort.

Following doctor's advice went to bed last night at 11 o'clock. Result feel as weak as a kitten this morning and all gone in the legs. Full gale blowing and will try what a game of golf will do. *Elliott thinks he is going to have another abscess, and apart from this has not vouchsafed any remark for three and a half hours.*

Sept. 12. Saw at station trunk labelled: "Southend. Not wanted on voyage."

Sept. 15. Have been busy all week with "Cranley". Bought two lovely papier-mâché chairs and table, and sold a dealer all the really bad modern stuff I possess. The Beaconsfield furniture just fits, and Allan Walton, a most amusing cove, is going to decorate.

On Tuesday I motored to town, saw Constance Bennett in *What Price Hollywood*. Left the New Gallery at 7.59, rushed to Scott's, swallowed six oysters and in my seat at New Theatre at 8.17 for Shaw's *What Price the Universe*, actually *Too True to be Good*. Some grand moments—three to be exact—and an ocean of witless fooling. Supped with Charles and Evelyn Cochran. C. B. in good form, and quite serious about reviving *The Winter's Tale*. I again urged on him the merits of young Richard Ainley, who would play Florizel to perfection. The Perdita is not yet decided on, and I told C. B. that what he wanted was a younger edition of Dorothy Dickson who would do the "wave o' the sea" business *à merveille*. "That's funny," said C. B. "I'm thinking of giving the part to Dorothy Dickson's daughter. Constance Collier is coaching her." He then told me that Mary Anderson had given him Charles Kean's prompt copy of the play. Home very late with moderate indigestion.

On Wednesday I wrote a much-too-good article about Constance Bennett. *Very* depressed all day and found it difficult to shake off. Why not change the name of "Cranley" to

"Long Home", the place to which Ecclesiastes tells us that man goeth? Jock back and doesn't look too ill. Offered to show me his wound, which I declined.

Saw the notice of a concert party. "The Good Companions. *Not* the play." Priestley *would* be pleased!

Heard a newsboy shouting, "French execution. Two-thirty winner." The execution was of Gorguloff, who assassinated President Doumer. When I was in Paris last summer the music-halls, or one of them, had a song beginning

"M. Doumer n'est pas un homme très sérieux"

which was intoned to the serious part of Chopin's Funeral March. Then to the flippant part of that tune the comedian sang

"Il va au théâtre avec sa famille."

The words fit the tune perfectly in both cases.

I read that at the execution the Paris crowd behaved exactly as our own eighteenth-century crowds behaved, keeping it up all night with dancing and singing.

Sat up late writing draft notice of Shaw's play which I must now revise and expand. Anyhow my mind is cleared for writing about it. All my big articles are proceeded by something like clearing the decks for action. I have to get the rubbish out of the way.

How good are the extracts in *The Times* from J. G. Spender and Cyril Asquith's *Life of Lord Oxford*. I particularly noted this:

Puff (Anthony Asquith) and I had a charming farewell; his is the most perfect character I have ever known, or ever shall . . . I only pray that our complete and unique comradeship may continue to the end.

Have just returned from police-station where I reported a young woman for stopping her car dead in its tracks and turning into her gateway without any kind of warning. We had to swerve to the right, forcing the car behind us to do ditto, and fortunately the road was empty. With any traffic coming the other way there must have been a smash. The police said they have no power even to caution the woman. Either

I must make a case or they can do nothing. Am much too busy to prosecute, yet it is driving like this which causes the appalling road casualties. The woman when I complained was rude, of course.

Told Jock about sitting up one night nursing Elliott's face. Jock, who is getting rapidly better, said he should like to paint this and call it "Nocturne à Southend".

Went to Rochford for an apéritif at the Anne Boleyn. On the way there saw four rabbits' tails lying in the road (sinister) and a young woman of the working class sitting in a hedge-bottom plucking her eyebrows with tweezers and the aid of a pocket-mirror (more sinister still).

Sept. 16. Every time somebody's Autobiography comes out

I turn to the Index to see if my name occurs, and of course it never does. I suppose everybody does this. What is less pardonable is that when somebody sends me for review an Anthology with some such title as *Niceish Bits of Current Prose* I look to see if by any chance they have got a bit of mine. Never a hope! The most extraordinary people are there. Every bullet finds its billet, but Gerald Bullett has never bagged any of his *billets-doux* out of my stuff. Honestly I think that the soldier's letter out of *Responsibility* should be included in any Anthology of Letters. Some day I shall suggest to E. V. L. that he should make a final selection and call it *The Last Post*. This is the letter :

DEAR MUM, AND DAD, AND LOVING SISTERS ROSE, MABEL AND  
OUR GLADYS,

I am very pleased to write you another welcome letter as this leaves me at present. Dear Mum and Dad and loving sisters, keep the home-fires burning. Not arf! The boys are in the pink. Not arf! Dear loving sisters, Rose, Mabel and our Gladys, keep merry and bright. Not arf!

No Anthologist or even reviewer has ever tumbled to this. Blast their silly souls, do they think I wrote it? If they do, then they must think me a major novelist. If they don't, then the thing should obviously be in any Anthology of the World's Best Letters. Damn it, they can't have it both ways!

In all the welter of words I have turned out, there is only one fragment for which I would crave any kind of permanency, if it's only a top-shelf. This is the tiny essay called "Half-Remembered Things":

I have often wondered whether anybody else's mind resembles a rag-bag as nearly as mine. All kinds of unrelated strands float through my mind for no apparent reason, things that I have not been clever enough to grasp, and others which I have let slip.

Snatches of old tunes, a line of poetry, a scene from a play—all these flash across without my being able to "place" them. I look before and after, and pine for things forgot. Suddenly I have a vision of Ellen Terry in an orchard, preparing to descend a ladder and gazing on some happy lover with welcome such as never was on sea or land or other woman's face; of Mrs. Kendal barring the door to an infuriated Mr. Kendal with as much determination as French and Joffre ever barred another door. Yet I have not the ghost of a notion what these two plays were about.

Or I find myself musing on a story from my childhood in which an old man shuts himself up in a cellar and his body is found some fifty years later gnawed away by rats. Or on a book of boyhood's days, in which the heroes, Ralph, Peterkin, and another whose name I cannot recall, also come upon a skeleton. The illustration of this find was to me so grisly that, sitting up late one night, I remember tearing the page out and putting it into the fire. I have not the remotest idea of the titles of these two books, nor what their authors' names were.

Sometimes I find myself humming an old song. The first word I can remember is "showers". Next something about "birds and flowers", or possibly "bees and flowers", and then, finally, "unto the weary, rest". I shall never know what that song is.

Or, again, it may be a picture. I remember one of an old man leading a decrepit horse, which was attached to a cart moving away from the spectator. The scene was, I determined, the coast of Suffolk, and for many years I invented for myself the title of "The Sea-weed Gatherer". I do not know why I should have found this title; the cart was empty. The thing hung upon my night-nursery wall,

and the old man whose face I never saw was for many years one of my closest friends.

I can recall a gate overlooking a rich vale, a sunset and some cows, and an older person telling me that one day these things would make me sad. Sometimes an odd view of the sea comes upon me, seen from an elevation of three feet or so—and suddenly I taste cold milk and rather gritty gingerbread, and feel the sand between my toes, and have difficulty in pulling on a pair of cream-coloured socks. Then I feel a tug at the hand, and am told I shall be “late for dinner, as usual”. That voice I can still hear. I heard it as I was writing the last sentence. It belongs to an old lady of well over seventy, who has alternately petted and bullied me since I was three. “Hurry up, Master James,” she was saying, “hurry up with that writing, or you’ll be late for dinner, as usual.”

Last night I awoke with a start, crying out: “Emma Jane Worboise! Emma Jane Worboise!” What stirring of memory was that? What book, read aloud by my old nurse, comes back to me on that name? Has anybody else, I wonder, a mind so disconnected, a mind so very like a rag-bag?

Sept. 17. Received whole bunch of letters on my last week’s article in *S.T.* Here is one. From a complete stranger, of course.

23 *Fursby Avenue,*  
*Church End,*  
*Finchley, N.3.*  
12/9/32.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

You say you wonder sometimes what sort of dramatic criticism people want to read on Sundays, and (after seeing somebody gollop your lot down in one minute and a half) you are doubtful if “taking pains is really worth while”.

Well, I can only speak for myself (though I might be able to muster up another couple who would agree with me) and I confess that I am so old-fashioned—or should it be revolutionary?—as to believe that dramatic criticism, like every other form of criticism, should be written for the *reader*. It should not be written for the box-office, for the

actor, for the manager, or even for the playgoer who wants to know what to see and what to avoid. It should be written for *me*,—one, that is, who likes good writing and doesn't care a hoot whether the critic is "right" in his judgment of a play, or whether it squares with his own or not. I read dramatic criticism—yours, I. B's., Charles Morgan's and J. T. Thorpe's in *Punch* (I don't think anybody else's matters) because it makes good reading, and for no other reason whatsoever.

For the same reason (the only valid one, surely,) I used to read the Great Allusionist. What was more glorious than A. B. W.'s column in *The Times* after a first-night? In quite 75 per cent of the cases I used to think his dramatic criticism was a jolly sight more enjoyable than the play itself. It was a perpetual wonder and delight to see how he struck his keynote—or hung up his peg—and then to watch the play of a lively mind, and (as Max said) a perhaps too tenacious memory, working on what was very likely anything but a lively entertainment of the night before. He could do graceful justice to the good ones, too, of course,—tricked out with a score or more of apt allusions, which meant absolutely nothing to well-known barristers in a hurry (or even in their leisure, I suspect), but which rejoiced the eyes of all readers "who *are* readers".

I like my critics to "take pains" with what they offer me. I am not content with what are called the "good, sound, reliable" men (of whom What's-his-name and Thingummy-bob and Likewise-you-know-who are excellent examples). It is not enough (in fact, it isn't anything at all) that the dramatic critic should be so prescient as always to praise the play that runs a hundred nights, and to slate the one that comes off after a week. None of these things moves me if the critic's own literary personality is not one I enjoy. He can keep his Christmas pudding; I don't want it.

So go on being as "erudite" and as full of worth-while quotations as you like, so far as one reader at least is concerned. It makes me feel superior when I meet well-known barristers and all the other people who quite naïvely confess that they only read dramatic criticism to "find out what the play is about". Good God! What a reason!

Yours sincerely,

BERTRAM R. CARTER.

Monty has made the point that barristers are accustomed by their training to get, and to want to get, to the point of a thing. They have no time for inessential flummery. He told me of one of his colleagues saying, "I can't go to the theatre any longer because they won't tell me the point of the play in five minutes and let me go." If they treat the play so, *a fortiori* the criticism of it. I sympathise. I want to get at the point of a novel in five minutes and resent having to waste hours in finding it. There are moods in which I feel that I will never again open another English novel but go back to Balzac and stay there!

Big day yesterday, Friday. Was so tired on Thursday night after the Shaw article that I went to sleep on hotel verandah after dinner and simply couldn't work any more. Woke about 7.30 next morning, went into Jock's room and found him contemplating his navel, now healing very nicely. Dictated broadcast talk in the middle of a wind attack. There must be some quality about my talks since I still survive as B.B.C. dramatic critic after six years' efforts in the Press and by the B.B.C. itself to replace me. Is it the voice? Maybe. Is it the manner? Perhaps. Is it the stuff I talk? No. Nevertheless I may as well give a sample of my talks which will never be reprinted, and so choose this one:

First let me ask; what are you all expecting me to say about the new Shaw play, because within reason I am prepared to say anything? Do you want me to confirm that it is a noble piece of work? In other words, if you want me to give Mr. Shaw a reference I will do so with pleasure. I have always found this playwright honest, efficient, hard-working, obliging, and at times sober. On the other hand would you like me to say that this play is a farrago of flimsy facetiousness? That also is O.K. with me, Baby! To be perfectly serious *Too True to be Good*, Mr. Shaw's new play at St. Martin's Theatre is both these things. It is one of the grandest homilies ever conceived by the human mind, so grand that parts of it bear comparison with *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It is also, as to nine-tenths, so farcically inept that if this nine-tenths were submitted to Mr. Tom Walls or Mr. Leslie Henson as the work of an



unknown author they would in my opinion turn it down without hesitation and with justification.

Now there must be some explanation of this. Goldsmith was said to "write like an angel and talk like Poor Poll". Why should Mr. Shaw, who can write like the heavenly choir, willingly desist from so doing to purvey chatter beneath the acceptance of any intelligent person? The answer is that our mentor obviously believes one of two things—either that intelligent people do not go to the theatre or that when they do they leave their wits behind them. Mr. Shaw, as most of you probably know, was some forty years ago Dramatic Critic to the *Saturday Review*. His criticisms have been reprinted, and I hope it is needless for me to say that they are the wisest and wittiest writings that have ever come from the pen of a dramatic critic. Among those articles was one in which Mr. Shaw proved to his own satisfaction, if to nobody else's, that in the nineties the intelligent people who were to be met with at classical concerts or in picture galleries were not to be found in the stalls of the theatres that day, though he said nothing about the pit. Now it is a commonplace that we all of us return to our first loves, and I do not see why we should not return to our first opinions. But then Mr. Shaw has never deviated from his, and all his plays have been written on the theory that the only thing about which an Englishman will consent to be serious is buffoonery. You see he is an Irishman, and as such is a natural critic of the English. As a critic he has discovered that the English are unable to distinguish between the various organs of the body, and particularly that they *will* confuse the head with the heart. When an Englishman feels, he is apt, according to Mr. Shaw, to believe that he is thinking, with the result that his whole conduct of life is based not upon what his reason forces him to believe but upon what his heart would like him to believe. Now take this into the theatre. The Englishman goes to the theatre to be entertained, and unlike the French he does not believe the functioning of the brain to be a part of entertainment, whereby it follows that the theatre must not be intellectual. There is a great deal of truth in this. Your Englishman is perfectly willing to bend himself to the study of Einstein or Sir James Jeans. He will, if put to it and without too much grumbling, even read a novel written

round the theories of those entrancing philosophers. But when he enters the theatre it is with the greatest difficulty that he can be persuaded to consider anything beyond the intelligence of a schoolboy. Now why, since Mr. Shaw held this view of English playgoers, and everything he had to say was the pure stuff of intellect, should he choose the theatre as his medium? I put it down to his natural cussedness, for he is naturally cussed and I say it with all affection.

It is an old complaint that the plays, strictly considered, are not plays at all but disquisitions, and what I suppose this really means is that they do not improve by acting as do the works of more normal dramatists. This I think is true. Speaking for myself, and always with the exception of *The Doctor's Dilemma*, I can hardly think of a play by Mr. Shaw which does not give me more pleasure to read than to see. That is because I take the old-fashioned view of the theatre as a place in which something happens. And by "happens" I mean gross and palpable happenings like people being murdered and their ghosts rising in a blue light to throw the murderer into convulsions of remorse ending in suicide, or a death-grapple with another murderer after throwing off an appropriate speech of some forty or fifty lines. Indeed Mr. Shaw has complained that Shakespeare's history-plays do not deal with the history of England at all but with the private misdeeds and retributions of its kings. Mr. Shaw in his drama has carried this theory into practice, for in nearly all the plays nothing happens, while everything else is discussed. A Shaw play consists of a table and chairs round and in which the characters sit and dig their teeth, not into a stage meal, but into some knotty theme which is troubling the public consciousness, or ought to be. *Too True to be Good* begins with a plot about a rich young lady which the author of *Charley's Aunt* would have discarded as altogether too improbable. There is a nurse who is no nurse and a parson who is a burglar, and the whole object of the imbroglio is to get the trio on to a sea-beach in a mountainous country where they can talk nineteen or more to the dozen. The mountains, it may be remarked, are not nearly so steep as the talk! And, as in every play by Mr. Shaw, it is only the talk that matters. Now what do they talk about? Well, they talk about something

which has troubled Socrates, Shakespeare and Bunyan and I should think every Bishop of London worth his salt,—that thing being, what it is that can keep the soul of man alive. Man cannot live by bread alone. By what else shall he live? The argument falls into two halves: What man believed formerly, and what he is to believe now. Curiously enough August, 1914 was about the date when Einstein and Sir James Jeans were making discoveries which have revolutionised the whole of modern scientific thinking. That date also brought to a head the question not only of how man is going to live with his fellow-creatures, but how nations are going to live with their fellow-nations. Mr. Shaw has fused the war and scientific issues into one issue.

Probably the majority of my listeners, being outside London, will not see this play; it will not be printed for some time, and even then many people may not be able to buy it. I think, therefore, that I shall best fulfil my duty at this microphone if I read to you in Mr. Shaw's own words those passages which constitute the gist and crux of this play. I think I should tell you that I am reading from a privately printed, unpublished version of the piece, whose sub-title is "*A Collection of Stage Sermons* by a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature". Some of you probably think of Mr. Shaw as an ogre who in the intervals between writing plays devours little children. If this be your view it will interest you to know that the book bears the inscription in Mr. Shaw's handwriting: "To Gillian Mary Bishop on her third birthday, though she had better not read it until her fifty-third." I shall read the passages, as well as I can, and you must imagine that on the stage they have the additional advantage of being recited by two of our finest masters of English speech.

Here followed three extracts, after which I concluded:

I hope I have not done too much injustice to what in the essence of it is one of the great testaments of our time.

George Bishop liked this talk so much when I showed it to him that he rang up Mrs. Shaw to tell her to get G. B. S. to listen in. With this knowledge I broadcast *really well*, tried

to reproduce Ralph Richardson's Bunyanesque manner, and satisfied myself for the first time.

Afterwards, sandwiches and champagne at Monty's and then to *Words and Music* the new Noel Coward revue at the Adelphi. Very bright and sparkling. Wrote notice in one hour, and at twelve took Monty into the Savage Club and supped off partridges and Pol Roger to the envy and admiration of George Bishop, Bergel of the *Evening News*, whose initials I always forget, George Whitelaw, Billy Leonard, Basil Cameron and a recently knighted doctor with a great deal of manner and collar. Left for Southend at 1.30. Mist, and had to go slow. Gave a harmless-looking fellow a lift and went out of way to drop him at Tilbury. A steward on the *Orontes* sailing next day. Got back about 3.15. This morning I read: "Armed bandits held up and robbed motor-cyclist named Hallam near Romford 2.30 a.m. Police scouring Southend Road and district."

Sept. 18. Took Jock to Burnham-on-Crouch, me sitting in the dickey. Discussed in a high wind and at fifty miles an hour the merits of "When daffodils begin to peer"—never mind what decision we arrived at—Jock pointing out the perfection of the word "peer" and the bird-persistence of the repeated "With heigh! with heigh!"

Caddie, during evening round, said: "The worst of long handicap players is they won't use their loaf." He meant "head". (Rhyming slang, from "loaf of bread".)

Sept. 19. Went to a film, arrived back at 6.30 and started dipping into *The Tempest*. Read all the lovely poetry of the masque at the end, and delighted to find in the beginning this description of Southend:

The approaching tide  
Will shortly fill the reasonable shore  
That now lies foul and muddy.

Sept. 20. Peter Page bad with gout in both ankles, which makes him stoop till he seems about four feet high. Had a drink in the interval of some play with him and young Van

Thal, of Peter Davies, the publishers. A pleasant young man. Left Globe Theatre at 10.45 and arrived here at 12.15, where I had Allan Walton, his friend Henderson, and Elliott to cold partridges and an excellent sparkling hock. The talk was goodish. They wanted to know about the play and I was too bored with it to tell them. Finally I said it was the kind of play which has witty intervals.

Sept. 21. More correspondence :

Villino Chiaro,  
Rapallo,  
Italy.  
16th Sept., 1932.

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

Thank you for a third delightful letter.

I assent to your wish. Let the "sleeping dog lie" for the present. Or rather, as I would more specifically and more diagnostically put it, let the pointer with insomnia be for the present kept in the dark.

But you must tell him later on. I, if I meet him when next I am in London, shall hasten to refer to the matter.

I wish you hadn't bothered to send for those two dram. crit. vols. of mine. I fear it will bore you even to skim them. If you do alight on two things in them that you prefer to your own album-enshrined pair, would you please have proofs sent to me in time for reading before final printing? For the American printers were guilty of misprints here and there; and I would not wish England to be misled.

Best wishes from

Yours sincerely,

MAX BEERBOHM.

P.S. You say that you aren't writing "a preliminary diatribe" for the book. I hope this doesn't mean that you aren't doing a good full introduction? The book would not be right without that. You must string the pearls . . . But what is this word "must"? I am beginning to talk like G. B. S.

P.P.S. Talking of G. B. S., I wonder which articles of his you have selected. I admire him *as dramatic critic* beyond

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all other men. I never tire of his 2 vols. He was at the very top of his genius when he wrote them. My especial favourites are—but enough, enough!

A witty letter :

39 *Sherwood Road,*  
*Addiscombe, Croydon.*  
18th Sept., 1932.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

Having made two futile excursions to the British Museum, in the hope of gaining access to that Valhalla of past journalism, the Newspaper Store, to be told on the first occasion, a Sunday, that the Room was closed, and on the second occasion, a week-day, that its contents had with that tender regard for the public convenience peculiar to British officialdom, been removed to Hendon ; and having further applied to the publishers of the *Sunday Times* only to learn that the issue in which I am interested is out of print, I am now taking the liberty of writing to the author of the article of which I am in quest.

It is your review of the play *Hedda Gabler*, with Miss Jean Forbes-Robertson in the title-rôle, produced I believe during the summer of 1930. Your comments made a permanent but necessarily rather vague impression upon me, as at the time I had never read any Ibsen nor seen Miss Forbes-Robertson. But having recently read a little but almost as much as I want to of the one, and seen a little but a great deal less than I want to, of the other, I desire most ardently to know what such a combination of the unthinkably grim and the incredibly beautiful could have been like.

I remember you made special reference to the incident of Tesman's slippers. What *could* she have done with them—and how did she contrive to make her lovely Rossettian hair look “not very thick”? I cannot cease to regret that I did not preserve what must have been a most illuminating commentary on a very enigmatic play.

Thanking you in anticipation for any help you may be so very kind as to give me in this matter, and in retrospect for many a Sabbatical chuckle,

I am,

Yours faithfully,

JESSIE PEET.

EGO

A letter from Charles Cochran :

49 Old Bond Street,  
London, W.I.

20th September, 1932.

MY DEAR JAMES,

I wrote a letter by hand yesterday to express my appreciation of your notice in the *Sunday Times*, but as I couldn't read it myself, I thought you might have some difficulty, and tore it up.

I was anxious to let you know as quickly as possible how much satisfaction I derived from your enthusiasm. It meant more to me than most of the other notices put together,—“Praise from Sir Hubert”, etc., etc.

Apropos the question of orchestration, I do not remember seeing the name of the scorer or scorers on the programmes of any light musical plays or revues. The greater part of the orchestration of *Words and Music* was done by a clever young fellow named Spike Hughes, a son of Hubert Hughes, who writes about music for the *Daily Telegraph*. The rest was done by our Musical Director, Hyam Greenbaum, a very fine musician.

I lost quite recently my best orchestrator, dear old Orellana, who did the whole of *Bitter Sweet*. Paul Rubens would not do a show unless Orellana scored it. Lionel Monkton and most of the musical comedy men of that period also relied on “Orry”. Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers and Jerome Kern swear by Russell Bennett, who did *The Cat and the Fiddle*. Noel is far more definite as to his orchestral requirements than the majority of the composers I have worked with.

In crediting me with the introduction of the nuns you pay me an unearned tribute, and apparently Noel's sly dig at *Casanova's* merry candle-bearing minxes in their nun's habits of pink and grey chiffon, missed fire.

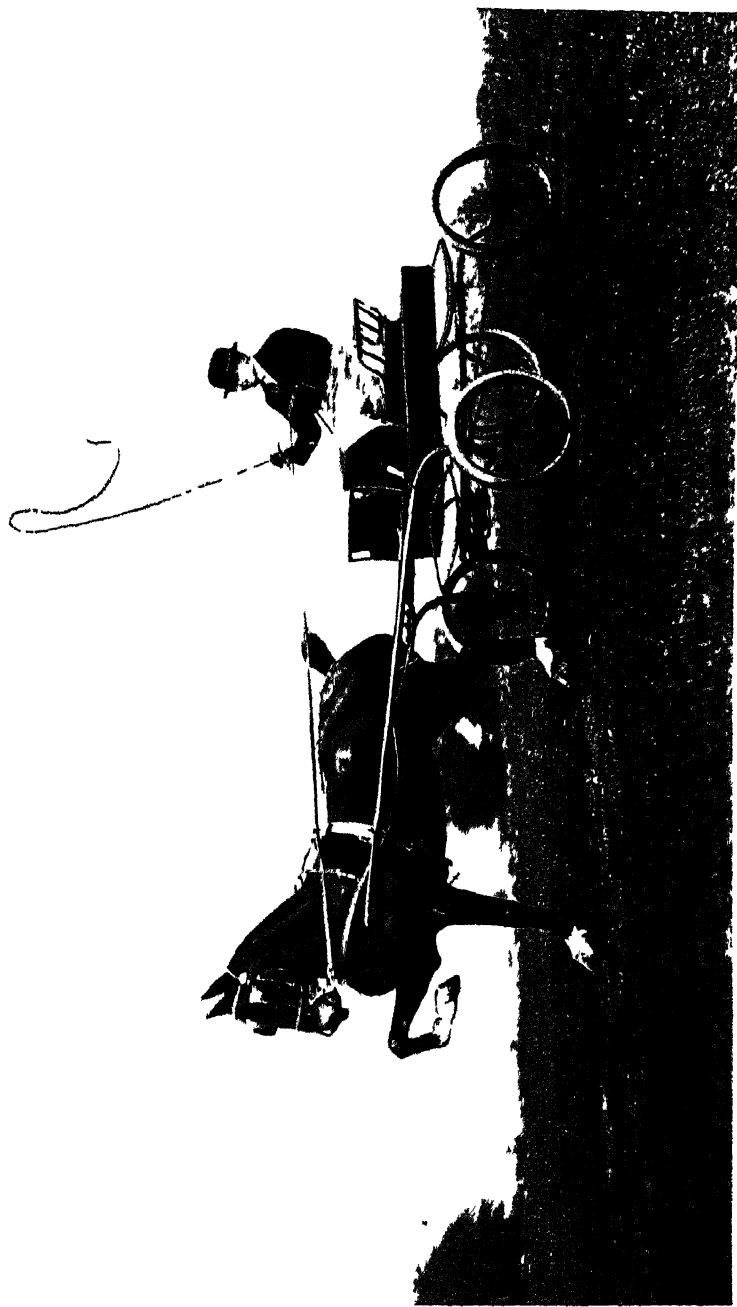
I am very gratified, Jimmy, that this last brilliant effort of Noel's has drawn from you such high praise.

With kindest regards,

Yours as ever,

C. B. COCHRAN.

Went up to town, taking two and a half hours. I really don't think I can stand the noise and strain of this journey by car. Shall have to use the train a great deal.



*Black Tulip with Albert Thoury Driving*





Savage Club at lunch time. Albert Toft came in looking like one of his own busts. Evening: *Miracle at Verdun* at Embassy. Plucky of them.

Sept. 22. Part of a conversation in a four-ale bar. I had said to a youngish-looking navvy that I supposed if he was out of work he could always enlist.

"Enlist!" he said. "In April, 1915, Mister, I was kitchen-boy at a golf-club. The cook, pulling my leg, tells me to clean the kitchen-grate with bacon fat. I does this and it kicks up a hell of a stink and mess. The secretary comes along and tells me to get the fat off with soda-water. I says I won't and he tells me to get out. So I gets out and joins the Rifle Brigade and goes to Hornsey. Being 'omesick I comes 'ome with a cigarette-card for a ticket as the stations was dark and you couldn't see, and after two days gets arrested for a deserter and shipped off to France where I spends Easter in the line."

"Easter?" I said. "But you couldn't be trained!"

"Trained enough for a deserter."

"How old were you?" I asked.

"Fourteen," he said. "And I wasn't fifteen till the 26th of August, when I got a birthday wound in my shoulder. So I've no call to enlist, you see, Mister, besides being never out of work. I've known the time when I've left one job at eight in the morning and crossed the road to another at half-past. I can swing a fourteen-pound 'ammer with the next man. I does good work—because if us blokes don't do good work the bricklayers and masons get on to us. I've got rid of the missus, I've no kids, and it's all O.K. Drink's been me downfall, but no ways me ruin!"

Sept. 23. My brother Gustave arrives at 11.27 p.m. and we sit up till two in the morning playing iron shots on the carpet and fondly imagining the bedroom next door to be unoccupied. Are disillusioned about this in the morning. Played two rounds of golf with G., who is fuller of theory than ever, but lags behind it in fact. He does everything except hit the ball. I gave him five bisques, halved in the morning

and lost on the last green in the afternoon going round in eighty and seventy-eight with two sixes and a seven in each round !

A Mrs. Pawley, a young Englishwoman held to ransom by brigands in China and in imminent danger of death by torture writes the most casual letters asking for the ransom to be paid quickly and adds, " Please send me some lipstick." G. tells me of an ingenious Chinese torture. They make tiny cuts in the skin not deep enough to draw blood and then with a fine camel hair brush paint the exposed nerve ends with a solution of cayenne pepper.

The following is the way I like my flattery laid on :

*Belle Vue House,  
Low Fell,  
Co. Durham.  
22nd September, 1932.*

DEAR MR. AGATE,

As I have spent the last eight years in an effort of will directed against writing to you about once a month to express my unvarying enjoyment of your weekly articles, I feel after your plaintive remarks on September 11th in the *Sunday Times* that I may be justified for once in answering your self-questioning. I feel competent to do this as I have practically never missed one of your articles since you began to write for the *Sunday Times*.

You ask what do I want (I am going to be unblushingly egotistical and consider your article as addressed to myself) on a Sunday in the way of dramatic criticism, when the plots of all the new plays are public property? My reply is that I would not dream of reading the platitudinous rubbish that passes muster for dramatic criticism in most of the dailies, when I know that by waiting till Sunday I can get a reasoned view by someone on whose judgment I have learned I can rely.

You ask what kind of dramatic criticism I want? I reply, " Yours." For years past you have perfected a style which in my opinion is unequalled, and as to what Mr. Walkey says about allusiveness, I say " Bah " to him ; for your varied and subtle allusiveness is to me one of the chief

charms of your style. Besides, as you yourself have already so clearly pointed out in your remarks on "Expressionism", the fool can read the words as plain matter-of-fact, while the person of culture (i.e. myself) can enjoy the allusion in addition to any other enjoyment that the fool may get.

You ask "Is taking pains worth while?" I am astonished to learn that you take pains—your articles all appear to be so easy and effortless, that I have wondered what the trick of the trade can be that allows such apparently quick and easy mastery of the fleeting impression. But if the knowledge that your article is the first that I read every Sunday morning (after the Collect for the day, of course) that it almost always gives me the keenest enjoyment, as well as a considerable amount of information; that I remember easily your most important points, and that I pass on your longer articles to appreciative friends abroad who enjoy them as much as I do—if this knowledge makes taking pains worth while, then I beg to assure you that it is worth while. I still stick at the two days' labour you mention: to a reader you appear to write effortlessly.

As for your two days' work, even if I had been the man who read it in two minutes, upon hearing your expostulations, I would reply, "Ah, Sir, but *what* a two minutes!"

Are you therefore to encourage the belief that you are entirely perfect? Alas no; you have two grievous faults (1) you aver that you can see nothing in Greek drama (can it be that the dramatic parts of *Œdipus Rex* say nothing to you?) and (2) you profess to admire the dramatic (God save the mark) works of one Shaw.

Yours sincerely,

R. FALLAW.

Sept. 24. Rhyme for a publisher:

Mr. Totentanz  
Says he was born in a manse.  
Between me and you,  
This doesn't look true.

I cannot understand the objection to being lampooned providing it's witty. Here's one about myself:

"I'm the earth, sky, and seas!"  
Is the belief of James Agate.  
"I'm the rind and the cheese!"  
Is the creed of the maggot.

Sept. 30. A very busy week, largely devoted to playing golf with Gustave and getting the 'flu. On Sunday we lunched with Peter Page at Colville Hall, meeting Monty at Chelmsford and taking him down with us. Found Mark Hambourg there with his witty wife who told us about a big party given by Nigel Playfair followed by an entertainment by Giles P. "You can't think what a bad entertainment it was!" Mark, in his quietest mood, played to us after lunch.

Walked on front yesterday and listened to band. Nobody round bandstand except a few people huddled in chairs and looking exactly like the characters in *The Cherry Orchard*. They were all there: Madame Ranevsky, Gaev, Dunyasha, and even the German governess holding an umbrella against the wind and sitting next to an empty chair. All in black with a rampart of piled-up chairs behind them. Incautiously I asked Jock if he knew anything more desolate than a seaside place out of the season. He replied: "Whence comes this sudden ebullition of unmitigated sanity?" He *loathes* Southend, and I was about to raise the subject of Osbert Sitwell's *Before the Bombardment*, in which the deserted seaside resort is beautifully done, leading to the old discussion of Art v. Nature, when the band struck up something rather jolly.

Read in evening paper how Mrs. Pawley, still in power of Chinese bandits, writes:

The messenger came to-day and this is a chit in reply. The bandit chief says that he must (underlined) have the cash soon, as he is getting fed up with keeping us. He is writing to you demanding the ransom and won't tell us how much he wants.

If the messenger does not come back in five days' time we are to be put through appalling (underlined) tortures!! In ten days we are napoo.

Seriously, get us out, please, as we are filthy (underlined) and bored stiff. Love to all from Charles and me, Tinko.

P.S. Soap required urgent (underlined twice).

"Bored" is the operative word, as Belloc would say.

In the evening sat in the lounge nursing my cold and listening to the hard-working hotel trio. All women. Meditations

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and Meanderings in Monastery Gardens. Nobody in lounge except Elliott and me. A perfect Bateman drawing. Went to bed early and read new story by Hergesheimer in Benn's ninepenny series. Why are not all novels published at ninepence? Must advocate this in *D.E.* The story is *Love in the United States* and H. seems to have *exactly* Arnold Bennett's quality. Why has nobody pointed this out?

Oct. 1. In answer to my request to be allowed to review Mrs. Wallace's *Life of Edgar Wallace* I was told that so far as the *D.E.* is concerned "Edgar Wallace is dead". Again they are right, and again it hurts.

Shanks's new novel *Queer Street* is out. He gave me the worst possible review of *Gemel*, merely a three-line slating for irrelevances. Have accordingly written him :

Palace Hotel,  
Southend-on-Sea.  
1st October, 1932.

DEAR DICK,

Do you now regret your review of *Gemel in London*? I have sent to the local coal-merchant for some coals of fire, but he has run out of stock!

Yours affectionately,  
JAMES.

Had ten minutes to spare to-day while Jock was typing, and picked up James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. I hope I don't miss anything of this quality while I am reviewing. Jock has learnt a bit of shorthand while in hospital and is now much quicker. Nice of him. To-day is the sixth anniversary of his starting work with me. I mean he has completed six years. We had a good lunch on the strength of it. The decorators are out of "Cranley" and it looks very pretty. Now for the carpets and curtains.

Oct. 13. The past fortnight has been completely taken up with correcting proofs of the *Anthology*. A hell of a business. Had to set my teeth and wire in, though Jock did most of the wiring. That is to say that he read the proofs

and I made the corrections, which is more or less the way the Anthology has been compiled. Jock says I am one of those rare writers who do not write their books "until day of publication" as reviewers say. But he put it better than that: "You don't review books till day of publication, and damn it you don't write 'em either!" My 'flu or cold lasted all this fortnight. Ill, nervy and very irritable. Decorators have now finished at "Cranley", but too seedy to take any pleasure in it. Must start the Sanatogen cure again. Have bought the picture of the view from this hotel window which Allan Walton did when he was down here. He has done another one, the view of Queen Victoria pointing to the pier with the garages behind. I don't like this because he has given it the colour of Martigues, all crude and lovely blues and yellows—but loveliness in the wrong place. The note of Southend is *pearl*. There was a magnificent sea and skyscape here yesterday. A storm was brewing and all the estuary was the colour of sulphur deepening to burnt treacle, while, ten or more miles away, the mouth of the Medway lay in golden sunlight. No plays worth seeing except *Children in Uniform*, about which I broadcast last night. All my colleagues try to explain Manuela on the grounds that she had no mother and was lonely. But how do they explain the young schoolmistress? Had she no mother either? And what may the Headmistress be supposed to mean by the categoric statement that Manuela is "just like a boy"? The truth is that Podsnap still rules this silly island.

My day yesterday. Had stayed the night at Ernest's, who at the moment is not quarrelling with Leo. Woke about ten, when Jock arrived. Dictated *Tatler* article. Luncheon at Café Royal with Joe Ackerley of the B.B.C. and discussed my talk about *Children in Uniform*. Owing to 'flu I had not seen this play and so my talk was general and based on the criticisms I had read. This did not satisfy me and Joe agreed. So I rushed off to the matinée which finished at 5.10. Back to Ernest's and re-wrote one thousand words which I broadcast at 6.50. Quick work. Then half an hour at B.B.C. photographer's. Took a pick-me-up at Heppel's, but no time to dress or dine, so swallowed a sandwich and off to *Service*,

a foolish play about a bankrupt stores which amused everybody very much except me. But then I once kept a bankrupt stores, and know how much more interesting it is than this sentimentalised, fairy-godmother version of it. So I yawned and nodded till eleven o'clock when I could get some food. But food, when you have had none for hours, means a drink of something and a dish you only look at. Then home by car to Southend and had to keep awake because Stan insisted upon falling asleep, which he did twice, and we should have gone into the ditch if I hadn't nudged him in time. Why do chauffeurs want to spend their time sleeping with their wives like Alfred Lester or at the wheel like Stan? Why can't I get a chauffeur who can and will chauffe? Is it to be wondered if I feel a wreck this morning?

Oct. 14.

Here's the stuff I broadcast about *Children in Uniform* :

When a German is confronted with something outside normal experience he sits down to study it, whereas an Englishman in the same situation sends for a policeman. The German is perfectly willing to believe that something he has not previously encountered in the world may nevertheless be as old as the world itself, whereas your Englishman, meeting something for the first time, imagines that it must be the first time the thing has happened. This explains why the Germans are a race of philosophers and the English a collection of cricketers.

The theme of *Children in Uniform* has been in existence ever since the world has had children, and you probably all know that it concerns what, in a school-girl, the English like to call *hero-worship* for her mistress. The theme is, we cheerfully admit, familiar enough in Germany, though we cannot imagine our own Becky Sharp viewing even the younger Miss Pinkerton in this light.

Your Englishman, confronted by something abnormal will always pretend that it isn't there. If he can't pretend that, he will look through the object, or round it, or above it or below it, or in any direction except into it. If, however, you *force* him to look into it, he will at once pretend that he sees the object not for what it is but for something that he



would like it to be. Show him an act of motor-banditry, and he will rejoice that the spirit of adventure still prevails with the young. Read to him out of the Sunday paper an account of some maniac who, for the fun of it, has put an old lady through her own mangle and then made off with the twopence-ha'penny yielded in the process, and he will not be horror-struck at the existence of people whose hobby is the outrage *qua* outrage, but deplore that to obtain twopence-ha'penny so much unnecessary violence was used.

Now translate the foregoing into terms of sex. The Englishman can get along with sex quite perfectly so long as he can pretend that it isn't sex but something else. Some little time ago I was asked to interest myself in a play about a young French girl who went into a nunnery at Étapes because of her spiritual and fragrant hero-worship of the Mother Superior. The Mother Superior being promoted to Paris, the young nun, who could not follow her, committed suicide.

To which I replied that I had written a play about a young man who had joined the London Midland and Scottish Railway as a porter because of his spiritual and fragrant hero-worship of the station-master at Rugby. The station-master being promoted to Euston, the porter put his head under the next train !

Now I cannot for the life of me see why a play about a nun should be awarded the Ballyhoo Prize for 1933, whereas the same play about a railway-porter would succeed in getting its author thrown out of every decent club in London. I do not see why if we are going to have plays about school-girls adoring their school-mistresses, we should not have plays showing Paul Dombey adoring Dr. Blimber, David Copperfield gazing shyly at the flute-playing Mr. Mell, and poor Smike cleaning the windows of Dotheboys Hall not for dear life but for dear Mr. Squeers !

Mind you, I am not asking for, and I do not particularly want, queer plays. All I ask, apropos of *Maedchen in Uniform*, is for some uniformity in that old maid, Mrs. Grundy. I think I am correct in saying that in its play form the film has been watered down. There is a scene in which a young girl trembles at first sight of the sympathetic mistress, and the explanation is offered that it is because she has lost her mother !

This brings me back to that policeman who is the British cure for everything. There is a story of an English peer who was waiting to take his ticket at a railway booking-office, when his valet, who was standing by with the usual bags, rugs, papers and so forth, ventured to call his master's attention to the fact that the man in front of his lordship had fallen down dead. "Rubbish!" said the nobleman. "Fetch a policeman!"

That, of course, is our attitude to any fact of sex, biology, or even Nature herself. I have not the slightest doubt that the Englishman considers the amoeba's habit of splitting in two as highly improper, and would stop it if he could. He is firmly convinced that there ought to be a gentleman-amoeba and a lady-amoeba—and if there aren't such things, then the amoeba is not nice to know.

The Englishman, you see, divides the entire universe into things nice to know and things not nice to know—the only remaining category being things nice not to know.

It only remains to be said that *Children in Uniform* as presented at the Duchess Theatre, is an intensely moving little tragedy of sex and nothing whatever else, and that it is to be praised for handling a difficult subject with the greatest possible delicacy.

Now when an Englishman says a subject has been exquisitely handled he always means exquisitely avoided. This is not the case here. The play is beautifully acted, two lovely performances are given by Miss Jessica Tandy and Miss Joyce Bland, and there is some first-class playing by a very large cast.

At the same time I do not advise Miss Christa Winsloe who wrote the play, Miss Barbara Burnham who translated it, and Miss Leontine Sagan who produced it—I do not advise these ladies to dramatise *Eric: or Little by Little*, for if they do they will doubtless find themselves marched little by little to the police-station.

Nov. 16. The publication of the second volume of A. B.'s *Journal* reminds me that I had better resume this, interrupted owing to unprecedented work and worry. The principal events during the past month have been as follows, in order of importance:

(1) Mrs. Pawley ransomed.

(2) Letter from B.B.C. saying they are thinking of changing their dramatic critic and will I become their film-critic? This would never suit me as I should have to see at least ten films a week instead of three or four. Could not afford the time and the *Tatler* might not like it. Besides, I've been something of a success as the B.B.C. dramatic critic and think better to rest on those laurels.

(3) Turn down B.B.C. proposal.

(4) Sacked by B.B.C., but pleasantly. After all they are in the right. It is only fair to the theatre that they should change the critic from time to time. The next fellow will be either a fool or a highbrow-prig, probably both.

(5) *Immediately* sell Arthur Barker a book of broadcast talks.

(6) Terrific onslaught by all creditors at once.

(7) Order some new clothes, having been very shabby lately and

(8) Change the Riley for a 17/75 Talbot, in excellent condition having done only 8,000 miles. Have, alas, to fork out £54, which comes out of my secret savings fund—odd articles etc. etc.—now standing at £75.

(9) Advertised for new chauffeur-valet, Stan having fallen asleep at the wheel three times in a fortnight. Put advert. in *Daily Telegraph* and received 211 replies. I interviewed the odd eleven, of whom *only one could drive*, and he handles the car like a virtuoso. Also a pleasant, civil-spoken youth, who looks like being good company without being cheeky. Engaged him, and both satisfied.

(10) Finally moved in to "Cranley" and spent all day yesterday hanging pictures. Dined with chauffeur at 10.30 off cold pork and beer. There was half a bottle of Bollinger in the larder but I had an economic fit and only looked at it. The house looks very pretty and Allan Walton has decorated it charmingly and with complete success. Front-room in French grey, dining-room in beer-coloured varnish, walls and ceiling, work-room in fawn with plain oak furniture and trestle-table, unstained like an orderly-room, bedroom in white. Curtains by various good artists.

No really good plays during the last four weeks, except perhaps Maugham's *For Services Rendered*. The one evening I

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I LIE ON IT

enjoyed was supper with Clifford Bax and Gwladys Wheeler, I think Bax is very nearly the most delightful man in all London. He almost reconciles me to beards.

"Those admirable critics, James Agate," said Jock to-day. In the outside world Baldwin has been telling everybody what will happen in the next war. There seems no doubt that we shall all perish, miserably. But this, fortunately, includes the French !

Nov. 18. I am always being asked why I don't write a book on The Trend of the Theatre since the War. I don't for two reasons. First, I don't believe the theatre has any trend ; it gets pushed this way and that according as the taste of the dam-fool public directs. Second, I am interested in recording actual impressions and not in vague theories. These are best left to elderly professors who when they go to the theatre get their spectacles and ear-trumpets so mixed up with beard and programme that they hear and see nothing. This may explain why these encyclopædic wiseacres are such rotten judges of any particular play.

Nov. 20. May tells me this. At one of Sarah's tea-parties there is a very English and ridiculous old maid who dotes on Sarah, and lives in a setting entirely composed of relics of the divinity—Marguerite Gautier's handkerchief, a strip of Frou-frou's petticoat, stocking worn in *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, and other "cloudy trophies". Leaving, the old girl first embraces Sarah and then makes a deep curtsy. This prompts the remaining guests to poke fun, which annoys Sarah to the point of saying : "This is indecent. I will not have it. She is a charming woman and devoted to me." After a bit Sarah recovers her temper and breaks the silence by saying : "I think she drinks !"

Dec. 3. Very busy putting together my book of wireless talks. Reviews of the Anthology have now come in. Desmond MacCarthy two columns in *Sunday Times*. Very handsome. Crompton Rhodes in *Birmingham Daily Post* splendid and Earle Welby in *Week-End Review* excellent. Allan

Monkhouse in *Manchester Guardian* writes the best article, easily. Well informed, intelligent, and enthusiastic about the subject-matter. A first-class piece of critical writing. Most reviewers complain of the absence of Pepys, Charlotte Bronte, De Quincey, etc. etc., all of them being people who wrote of the theatre without being dramatic critics. I expressly warned readers and reviewers about this in the tiny preface ! Perhaps it was a pity I broke my rule in one or two cases, because this gave them an excuse. If I had taken their advice, i.e. done what they want me to have done, there would have been no room at all for any professional critics ! This morning received a charming letter from Max :

*Villino Chiaro,  
Rapallo, Italy.  
28 November, 1932.*

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

*The English Dramatic Critics* is giving me very great pleasure. It's a handsome volume physically, apart from all its other merits. I like the solid and *unaffected* pages. I'm relieved to find that there is the proper space after full-stops, and after colons and semicolons. You told me that Mr. Arthur Barker is a young publisher. Ask him to take my word for it that this "proper space" is infinitely the most important thing in typography. Many publishers recently have ignored this fact, so that the writer's words come out as a breathless, syncopated gabble, and the reader's pleasure is spoilt. By the way, there ought (I am sure you and Mr. Barker will agree, on reflection) to have been a "white line" between the end of each essay and "— From" etc. Or "from" etc. ought to have been in small type. By the mode adopted the eye of the reader is confused in reading the last sentence. (And the last sentence is the most important of all. I have heard people say that the first sentence is. Perhaps they're right if they're thinking about newspaper articles. But otherwise they're wrong. The first sentence is of course important in a reprinted article too.—But so are all the other sentences.)

I think your general canon of selection is admirably right. We have got all the old plays, and can form our own opinions about them, if we care to read them (which I personally

don't) ; but we haven't got the old actors and actresses, and there's a great thrill in seeing and hearing them—as we more or less can, or can persuade ourselves that we can—through the eyes and ears of those (very few) men who have had a gift for understanding, and for writing well about, the awfully elusive art of acting.

But I rather agree with Desmond in the *Sunday Times* that there is too much about Sarah. You may say, "One *can't* hear too much about Sarah." But I, in my blunt Yorkshire way (for I am Yorkshire on the distaff side), reply, "Lad, one can."

I agree also with Miss Enid Rose, *ibid.*, that you should have had one of Gordon Craig's beautiful things.

Also, I wish I had thought of suggesting to you that you shouldn't forget to admit into your book Charlotte Brontë's description, in *Villette*, of Rachel's Phèdre. George Henry Lewes is very splendid on that theme. But he would have been the first to admit (he who was one of her first henchmen) that Charlotte could give him points and a beating.

Also, I wonder how you found it in your heart to exclude De Quincey's essay on the knocking at the gate. You may say, "It's too well known." But all the tike in me says stubbornly, "Lad, it *cannot* be too well known."

Many thanks for Clement Scott. How well he comes out ! When I began to write, he was nearing a rather premature dotage ; and I knew nothing of his earlier work, except by hearsay. I have lately been reading *David Copperfield* again, after many years. If Dickens had taken to dramatic criticism, he would have done it *exactly* in the manner of Clement Scott. (And Clement Scott's novels would, I fancy, have been *very* like Dickens's.)

And thank you too for all the space that you give to dear old Jo Knight. He richly justifies your generosity. In my time he had ceased to count. He wrote for three different papers, in three quite different manners (none of them sincere). He had ceased to care. He had sold his soul to the Garrick. Perhaps it wasn't a bad bargain. He had a very jolly old age. But how well, as I now know through you, he had written in his prime ! And how pleased and proud, could he come back to life, would he be at "this young Mr. Agate's" appreciation of him !

I enclose a little typescript, hoping you will be so good as to pass it on to the Chairman (you yourself perhaps) of the dinner that is to be given to J. T. Grein.

With warmest congratulations, again, on your anthology,

Yours sincerely,  
MAX BEERBOHM.

No good jokes except that the English are now confounding the twenty-eight millions we owe America with the probable size of Australia's score in the first Test Match. On the first day Pollock, who was reporting it for the *Daily Mail*, pretends to have telephoned from the office the Australian close of play score as 28,000,000 for six wickets.

Billy Leonard said: "You know who I mean—the fellow who wrote a life of Christ and threw a bottle of whisky at Mostyn Piggott."

Rather bucked to-day to receive an invitation to dine "all friendly-like" with Siepmann and Lionel Fielden after my farewell broadcast talk. I hardly know Siepmann. Lionel is a personality compounded equally of intelligence and charm. Conceals a ferocious appetite for work under a studied languor. I am afraid this will be a danger to him. Your air of seeming inefficiency may be the open sesame to the Foreign Office and private secretarydom. But I doubt whether Broadcasting House understands it.

*Dec. 19.* Have been indulging in terrific golf correspondence with brother Mycroft. It began with my sending Gustave a passage out of Bernard Darwin's articles in *Country Life*:

At the moment of writing I have just come to the end of a delightful three weeks of mild golf at Aberdovey, and of one thing about it I am justifiably proud: I never had a theory during the entire time, and that, so far as I am concerned, is a world's record. Let me be exact in making so remarkable a statement. I do not mean that I never told myself not to hurry or to keep my eye on the ball; it is impossible to be quite so beautifully brainless as all that; but I never did invent anything about my hips or my feet

or my grip or the path my club was travelling, or any such complicated nonsense, and the result was that I hit the ball respectably well at the time, and knew a mental peace, in non-golfing intervals, that was to me unique.

I knew that this would "draw" my brother, and it did.

Some day somebody ought to publish Mycroft's letters on golf, for they show an intensely logical mind functioning beautifully. G. pretends that the following is largely a paraphrase of one Morrison. Maybe. But I know Mycroft's mentality when I see it.

. . . Something occurs to me that any ordinary psychologist ought to have found out long ago. Having observed that ninety per cent of the world's great golfers have been illiterate people, quite incapable of differentiating cause and effect, still less of registering and communicating to others their sequence of actions, I deduce that the secret of golf *must* be a very simple, non-complex, natural, obvious business, requiring no words to describe it, almost unteachable except by demonstration. Consider the origin of the game—Scottish artisans, mainly joiners, hardly able to write their own names, much less talk of the functions of the different parts of the body. . . .

. . . The mental process I have in mind goes something like this. "Here I have an uncoiled spring. How can I wind so as to store up all its energy and then let it go so as not to lose any?" That seems to cover all the ground. I feel in my bones that by thinking on some such lines on and off the course, and by constantly visualising a perfect co-ordination of effort, it may come; and if it does I know that I shall then say, "Why, of course, I have known this all along. It's quite easy." You may think this is senile decay, to think of becoming a long driver at the age of fifty-three, but I am like that. I am improving every day on the fiddle, for instance, *whether I play or not*—so long as I *think* about music. . . .

. . . I am not content to go on in the ruck of players of no style related to the game of golf, all of whom can hit a ball by brute force as far as, or further than, I can. It makes me ashamed to play with men like one I struck on Sunday (a master butcher, I think he is), *who spat on his hands*, flourished the club round his head three times, shifted



both feet going up and one coming down, swayed eighteen inches to the right and lurched forward and hit the ball two hundred yards down the middle *every time*. He was a little, pot-bellied, red-faced, bald-headed vulgarian, who loudly voiced his supreme contempt for anything scientific about this "bloody sport" as he called it. . . .

. . . Why has the artisan golfer the secret? Because he treats the game like his job, say flogging (planing) a floor, or sawing wood, or felling a tree, and at last I come to it, in the historic words of old Bob Martin, the Scotch caddie, "Like an auld wife cuttin' hay." That is the great secret. Mowing with a scythe is the movement a natural golfer employs, *not for one shot but for all*, down to the shortest approach. It is indeed strange that for so long the golf "swing" should have been talked about so much, when not one in a thousand has understood what it really was. What a spectacle really, when you come to think of it—thousands and thousands of golfers all over the world all playing like hell and ninety per cent of them *never getting any better at it!* Mostly intelligent people, thinking, reading, taking lessons and playing harder than ever, and never approaching the standard of your little assistant professional, probably an illiterate person. Can you imagine so much wasted mental and physical effort in any other occupation?

. . . The most dangerous pitfall in discussing any system of training, whether in ethics, art, or sport, is that of reasoning from the particular to the general. I hope, in fact I think I may dare to say I know, that in my analysis of golfing methods you will find that I always go back to a fundamental principle, and treat the exceptions *as* exceptions, or idiosyncrasies, or individuality, or what you will, but never confuse the two. It is this confusion which tempts a beginner at golf, having seen Andrew Kirkaldy drive three hundred yards with a flick of his forearms, to say: "Here is a champion. He has an 'arm' swing. It must be right or at any rate good enough for me." Quite forgetting that A. K. was built abnormally with arms like two blacksmiths each. . . .

. . . The term "style" should never be used to mean "method" or "habit". It should always imply a degree of stylishness; for instance A has "style" or "good style",



*Sarah Bernhardt*



but B has "a bad method". To speak of an unsound style is simply loose English. The poor chap can't say: "It is my natural *method*," unfortunately, because it isn't a method but a habit—like sucking his teeth. A method implies thought and he hasn't thought. . . .

. . . I once had the privilege of walking round with Vardon, Braid, Duncan and Renouf,—a private view of the great ones practising for the opening of Hopwood. There were only half a dozen of us there. One was able to be quite close to and see their lies, and what club they took and hear their remarks. It was all most interesting. I remember one shot of Braid's. You know the fourteenth—a dog-legged hole. It was against the wind and Braid pushed his drive out to the right of the bunker—well out. He asked Renouf (one of his opponents) how far off the green was. Renouf said: "Take your cleek and hit as far as you can." Of course, any opponent who asks Tommy for advice when playing for a quid a corner deserves what he gets; or perhaps, to be more charitable, Renouf had forgotten what Braid's cleek shots are like. Anyhow, a hundred yards behind the fourteenth green is the ninth and Braid landed on that, and when he had picked up and dropped on the far side of the ninth green he was nearly out of bounds a hundred and fifty yards beyond the fourteenth. He didn't say much but he looked volumes. That is by the way. What I am coming to is that I saw in their play—and it was particularly noticeable in iron shots off the tee—that the ball seemed to stay on the club for quite an appreciable time. Imagine hitting a half-blown up child's ball with a racquet, or a hard ball with a *very* slackly-strung racquet, and you get the idea. It would be interesting to know how long the ball does stay on the club face. It has to impinge and flatten itself to make the mark on the club nearly its own size, so it must be there an appreciable time. It looked like a slow application of force and was accompanied always by a push-through of the club head *parallel with the ground* for quite a foot in length. This, I believe, is the secret of their iron play, if not wood also. It is probably what Tom Young meant by the "double push" being the secret of golf, though he would never tell me exactly what he meant. If one tee'd a ball and put another piggy a foot in front of it, and could cut both the

piggy's heads off with one shot, I believe one would achieve a shot comparable to anyone's (within reason—we are not giants like Braid). This terrible nomenclature of golf has done so much harm. "Follow through" has been taken to mean any kind of wrapping the club round the neck, whereas it should mean this one foot of push-through, and it is this which one should have been drilled in. After that nothing matters. The club can do and will do what it likes. Now assuming that I am right and that the cutting off of the two piggy heads is the secret. How is this to be achieved? Try this experiment. Take an iron and find two spots on your carpet a foot apart. Address the right hand one and try and reach the other in front with the club head. You can't do it, of course. The club head comes up in an arc and misses it by half an inch. Now push out your hips to the left and let your right knee slacken and you can reach it all right; in fact, in that position you can address the forward spot as easily as you did the back one. And if you do it in front of a mirror you will see that you look exactly like Vardon, or still more, Duncan, at the impact. Try scraping the ground without pushing the hip and you may do it but you fall on your nose. . . .

. . . To return to our weedy, half-starved, illiterate little caddie-master, and the reason he gives you a half and a licking; the reason is that he has got the proper golf swing (shared by all the great ones from Bobby Jones downwards and only disguised by superficial idiosyncrasies), which he employs for all shots, and *you haven't*. That is the whole thing in a nutshell. How the little snotty-nosed caddie is able to rise from the ruck of his kind and excel over the athletic, brainy, leisured amateur is a curious anomaly—probably through some simian instinct of imitating other professionals (even so low a standard of intellectual attainment being sufficient—haven't I always said so!). Anyhow, there it is, the proper foundation of the game has come to him somehow, and thereby he has been able to arrive at his full capacity while you and I, whose game is built on a bad foundation, can never achieve our full capacity, although it is greater than his. If his capacity is ten and yours twelve, he has reached ten but you only nine. Therefore, he beats you. . . .

. . . I have read many books on golf, full of misconcep-

tions, confusion of cause and effect, fallacies, and other muddle-headednesses, but never, never have I read anything to equal page 2 of your last letter. I don't mean that your iron play isn't good. It must be if you are getting there more or less. It is your writing about it which is so rotten and so dynamically misguided. . . .

. . . I think, on the whole, you had better not start thinking about your game—because you think so damn badly. You had better play it instead, because you play it so damn well. . . .

. . . Yes, my handicap is still nine, owing (a) to being laid up half of each year with rheumatism and (b) knowing too much about the game! We are all well and revelling in our garden. This has succeeded beyond our expectations and is really very charming and full of flowers, *which you wouldn't expect from a garden of mine!*

The last half-dozen words show that brother Mycroft is not without a sense of fun at his own expense.

Dec. 29. A very busy month, about which I will try to recollect something as soon as I have recorded that the *Spectator* calls the Anthology "slovenly". This adjective to ME, who have a complex about being thorough. I left the Anthology to speak for itself on purpose. However, the *Times Lit. Supp.* weighs in this morning with two respectable and respectful columns.

Of the month's events I remember little except work. Dinner to J. T. Grein. This was a fiasco. The dinner was given by the Critics' Circle to mark J. T.'s seventieth birthday and fiftieth year as a dramatic critic.

Presumably, then, the speeches should have been about J.T., whereas Morgan, who was in the chair, spoke for twenty minutes about Shaw. It seems he was originally down to propose Shaw's health and declined to scrap the speech which he had prepared. It was an *oration* in *The Fountain's* best prose. I sometimes wonder whether Morgan's studied prose may not go the same way as that of Walter Pater, George Meredith, Henry James, and George Moore who is his idol. Samuel Butler said: "I never knew a writer yet who took the smallest pains with his style and was at the same time readable."

If at a party somebody asked me to state offhand who in my opinion were the six best prose-writers, I should say Job, Shakespeare, Bunyan, Defoe, Dickens, Shaw. If pressed for the reason I should say it was because they never thought about style and so achieved a rhythm like that of the golf-caddie who does not know how to swing a club but just swings it.

Dinner to J. C. Squire. A worse fiasco. Not far from me was a rude, much be-Tatlered, society madam. She was about a quarter tipsy, and throughout the entire meal I wished I was anywhere else. Opposite was Vyvyan Holland, looking the oddest mixture of Oscar Wilde, J. B. Priestley and Lilian Baylis. Chesterton, who was in the chair, made a fine speech including one sentence about English tradition, "of which our more patriotic newspapers naturally know nothing". Duff-Cooper followed with fifteen minutes of Tory nit-wittery, after which Rothenstein spread himself in the Jewish manner for another ten minutes. Then Squire spoke and talked about nothing except the difficulty of seating five hundred guests.

Made my broadcasting farewell on the 21st. Tried hard not to force the note, and rather disappointed at the small number of subsequent protests! I seem to have made my acquiescence with the B.B.C. policy in sacking me too convincing. It was gratifying when Hibbert came to the mike after my talk and publicly thanked me and wished me "au revoir", *officially*. I dined with Siepmann and Fielden at Boulestin's afterwards. They want me to "keep in touch" and "not go away". They also want me to prepare a series of talks about great plays of the past, i.e. *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* with a gramophone record by Mrs. Pat giving the big scene. To be called "Stars in their Courses". Not a bad idea.

## 1933

Jan. 19. Alan Parsons died on Sunday morning of pneumonia after 'flu. I met him at dinner at the Garrick on the first night of *Dinner at Eight* some ten days ago. Looking at the bill of fare he said : " Oysters, caviare, roast pheasant, foie gras, really the food in this club is the lousiest in London." He was a remarkable figure with his great height, fine head of grey hair and majestic collars. The rest of him was a scale of descending magnificence, often ending in coloured socks with his dress-clothes. He suffered from claustrophobia, and watched nearly all plays standing up at the back of the dress-circle. He wrote most of his notices half at the Garrick before the play and half after the first act, since " my two million readers have got to know about this play whether I do or not ". He hated the outlying theatres and called all the rubbish " my favourite play ". Not a first-class judge of pieces but a capital judge of acting. I remember Viola Tree bringing him to my flat in Doughty Street some ten years ago to ask whether he should give up the Home Office for journalism. I advised No unless he had a private income, but Alan said he would sooner starve than go on auditing the accounts of the Runcorn Fire Brigade. Soon after he joined the *Daily Sketch* as Mr. Gossip in succession to Peter Page. *The Times* says wrongly that he chose dramatic criticism. He didn't, for the good reason that if a man had the qualifications of Shaw, Montague and Ivor Brown all put together he would not be allowed to exercise choice. You are pitchforked into dramatic criticism or not at all. Alan was a violent anti-snob, on which subject he could be vitriolic. Otherwise the kindest of men, and a crony of Monty and St. John Hutchinson. After two years of Mr. Gossip he became dramatic critic to the *Daily Mail*, and will not be replaced easily even if he thought Shakespearean production ended with Tree. I shall



miss him greatly, as we all shall. Not an enemy in the world.

The past three weeks have been entirely taken up by my finances. In the meantime I wander about the flat like an impecunious squirrel in its cage. I suppose in the future my creditors who see me lunching will want to know why I drink beer instead of water. Alan Parsons told me that when he had a trustee the fellow used to badger Viola because she bought *best* end of mutton !

As I was writing this the post brought a copy of *Toute L'Édition*, a new publication to me. In it I read :

James Agate, le critique du "Daily Express", résumant dans son feuilleton du 27 décembre dernier l'année littéraire qui vient de se clore, a pour ses compatriotes quelques critiques assez sévères :

"Ce qui nous rappellera l'année 1932, dit-il, si quelque chose doit nous la rappeler, c'est le La Fontaine de M. Charles Morgan . . . Le succès de ce roman est, à mon avis, la seule blague qui ait illustré cette année solennelle.

". . . Le livre qui, pour moi, a été le seul à avoir presque l'odeur du génie, est l'Invitation à la Valse, de Rosamond Lehmann.

". . . Entre tous les romans que j'ai lus cette année, je donnerai le premier prix au petit livre de Mlle. Lehmann et à celui de L. A. G. Strong : Les Frères. Je disqualifierai The Narrow Corner de M. Maugham, mais seulement parce que ce grand maître peut faire mieux.

". . . Voulez-vous, séduits par la musique de Carmen, de la boucherie à Séville ? Choisissez alors Death in the Afternoon, d'Ernest Hemingway.

". . . Laissez-moi maintenant vous parler avec certitude de deux livres dont chacun, dans son genre, doit être le meilleur de l'année. Le premier est Brave New World, de M. Aldous Huxley. Le second est une anthologie de la littérature anglaise avec commentaires : Texts and Pretexts, de M. Aldous Huxley.

". . . A l'exception de M. Huxley et peut-être d'un autre écrivain, il n'y a pas, aujourd'hui, un seul homme ou une seule femme qui soit écrivain au sens où Laughton est un acteur et Kreisler un violoniste.

". . . L'autre exception possible est Miss Mary Butts,

qui vient de publier *Death of Felicity Taverner*, qui est peut-être le roman le plus irritant du moment. Irritant parce que son style est follement prétentieux et son sujet d'une absurde intensité.

"Mais Miss Butts sait se servir de la langue ; elle est le seul écrivain dont l'entrée dans les lettres soit justifiée par l'évidente maîtrise qu'elle en a."

The stuff really reads quite well in French. The point I tried to make about *The Fountain* is that its frantic reception by the hicks and hayseeds of America was a joke. I can't read the esoteric stuff, and just don't believe that anybody except Darlington, who is Charles's shadow, and Charles's lovely wife can read it either ! Am afraid the article mortally offended both of them. I wound it up in verse, Charles having been a prisoner of war in Holland :

He dwelled among the untrodden ways,  
And wrote where Zuyder Zee'd,  
A book which all reviewers praise  
And nobody can read.

Naughtier still was my notice of a novel by "Hilda Vaughan", the aforementioned lovely Mrs. Charles Morgan. This contained an Imaginary Breakfast-table Conversation at More's Gardens, beginning : "Mrs. M. (*opening letters*) : 'Good morning, Charles. I see they've given me the Hawthornden. What have you got?'" Seriously, when it comes to the sublimated stuff, say a play by Turgenev, there's nobody to touch our Charles, or get within a mile of him. His fault as a dramatic critic is that he insists upon looking for sublimation everywhere and being very cross if he can't find it. A character has only to mention the soul, and Charles will think nobly of it for the rest of the column.

Went to a party on Wednesday last given by Herbert Morgan in honour of Prince Arthur of Connaught. In the Pinafore Room at the Savoy and well done except for a fiddler and pianist who made hell's own noise and almost prevented conversation. Why not have put them in the next room ? At my table were Prince A. who never said a word, Sir Gerald and Lady du Maurier, a bit subdued, Michael Arlen, George Bishop

and Leonora Corbett. Told them the story of a well-known actor and his wife going to a house in the West End which advertised service flats. The lady knocked at the door and asked the drab who answered it whether there was one vacant. "Will you be wanting it all the afternoon?" asked the girl. Had to talk a lot, and I hope not too much. Drank too much champagne, anyhow, and got home about four o'clock. Will shop-keepers note that it is good publicity to be seen at such affairs, and that the 'buses and tubes are not running at that hour in the morning?

*Jan. 18.* Went to Alan Parsons' funeral. Anglican service at Hampstead Parish Church, without one word for human needs at such a time. The Lesson from the Book of Revelations, stuff which has now no meaning, though I doubt whether it ever had much. What has Alan to do with archangels? Then the lovely Twenty-third Psalm, but in the dreadful version which begins "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not lack anything". Viola very much mistress of herself; she went round after the ceremony and thanked everybody. I did not go on to Golders Green.

Looking through some family papers the other day May came across this charming old letter, showing incidentally where my mania for Shakespeare quotation comes from. It is addressed to Mrs. James Agate, at Horsham. This was my grandmother, and the date is 1827.

*Albury 22nd May 1827.*

MY DEAR SISTER,

I write to you on extraordinary & important occasions. The subject of my present letter I think you will deem one of that character though in its results I do not think it will be of very great importance. Before I go to the actual subject of my letter I must tell you that mother has been at Albury and Abinger ever since last Sunday week. She was not very well when she came here and was stopped at Cox farm a day or two on account of slight indisposition. She returned from thence to Albury on Saturday morning & was attacked in the evening with very severe pains similar to those she had at Meadrow some time since. Applications

of warm water and flannels to the most painful parts subdued the pains and she finally passed a pretty good night. Last night she had another attack but not so severe a one & she looks better & eats a lot more to-day (Tuesday) than she did yesterday. Mr. Newland pronounces the complaint an intermitting fever and fears a relapse again to-morrow, but does not think mother at all dangerous. She is not to go home till Thursday & perhaps not then. A note from Sarah has just informed us that since I saw her on Sunday she has had a slight attack of inflammation which has furnished a very little employment for Mr. Parsons, has occasioned a little small gossip between those congenial souls & has so ended. Now I am upon bodily diseases I acquaint you that Messrs. Drummond, Austen of Shalford, Woodyer of Guildford, Ryde of East Shalford & several others have had dangerous attacks of inflammation, & then proceed to the diseases of the mind.

Before I go an inch farther I must beg you to make a pause, a full stop and I beg you will suffer me to premise that you and I, both of us, have indisputably a few (I hope a very few) faults in our characters which it would argue a considerable portion of impudence, & a great want of self knowledge in us, to deny. I have no doubt that James will readily join in the same rank & file with us. My only object my dear sister in advising our self-loves to make this concession is that our hearts may be attuned to that degree of sensibility as will freely admit & produce the impression & feeling of charity towards the faults and weaknesses of all human kind. Having thus discharged a small portion of fun, natural to a mind that feels serious reflections unavoidable & yet wishes to put off the dreadful moment, I hereby commence my subject. Excuse me if I huddle things together in a very strange manner, for I really don't know where to begin.

My subject is *Chinnock* & (let me put them some further distance asunder than they have been of late) *Sarah*. Will you believe that Sarah has kept up a Correspondence with Chinnock ever since you were here? Will you believe that, with the little *or no* means she has ever had of knowing his character, he is the wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best? Will you believe that his childish, aye false excuses for transferring his affections (like a carrion crow from one carcase

to another) from one object to another, are true as the very gospel? Will you believe that the very fact, & nothing else, of a man having a new sweetheart every fortnight is no reason in her mind why that man is not true to love & worthy of belief & acceptance? Can you believe these things & keep the natural ruby of your lips while mine are blanched with anger? But hearken a little further if you have patience. Will you believe that she suffers Chinnoek to kiss—but I say she *does* suffer him to kiss her, to paddle upon her neck with his damn'd fingers? If it be true as the Miss Taylors' thought that a woman is with child if a man takes her round the waist, Sarah is certainly with child by Chinnoek. I believe I have come to a climax but there is one thing more I must ask you. Will you credit that Sarah pronounces Chinnoek to be a man of great sensibility & very refined feelings? Hard as these things are to believe yet they are true. It is astonishing that a person can admit that extreme degree of credulity which induces her to accept as truth professions such as these. "You do not know me Miss Evershed but the more you know of me the better you will like me—I am a very virtuous person & love virtue in others & as for you I have loved you for these two years but had not the courage till of late to tell you so altho I have solicited two other females very lately to accept me for a husband." But I do not marvel that a person believes all that Chinnoek says who believes all that Old Parsons the Godalming Doctor says.

Lou has just told me of a thing or two that I will tell you that you may form your own opinion of the matter. Sarah told Chinnoek that she did not feel love for him, only esteem—"O never mind that, the other will come." She adduced the state of her health as a reason for declining matrimony at present. "It would do you good," he said—"How do you know?" "O a person told me said he that Dr. Bacon said so." I ask you—can this be true—if it be not it is consummate art & consummate villany. When I see you my dear sister I have many more things to say, at the present I am tired of the subject & I think I have said enough to warrant you to form some idea of the connexion. My intention in writing to you is, that James & you may decide in what manner to act towards Chinnoek on Whit sunday, (and I assure you I have left unmentioned several

facts which I hold to make decidedly against him)—and that you may be so far acquainted with these matters that we may converse on them when I see you without going over the detail again, which on Whit Sunday perhaps we shall not have time to do.

Do not by any means let Sarah know that I have written to you & above all things keep this letter from her for I know many things in it would hurt her feelings very much. My opinion on this subject is quite made up & I hope most cordially it will coincide with James's & yours. Sarah does not wish me to talk to her on this subject and I have no desire. I do not think she will be at Horsham on Whit Sunday. She has, however, instructed Chinnoek how to behave to her if she is. I confess to you that Sarah's conduct has disturbed me exceedingly. Nothing before has disposed me to think so meanly of her as this affair. L. and I join in love to you both and wishing we may agree in this and all other things, I am ever yours affectely . . .

JOHN EVERSLED.

May looked up the family tree and found that Sarah got her Chinnoek, marrying him five years later and having one still-born child.

*Feb. 4.* Lunched at Farnham Chase, Gomer Berry's place.

House so lovely that I felt as though I was walking through the pages of *Country Life*. None of the guests seemed to be below the rank of Ex-Viceroy and Vicereine, which reminded me of poor George Mair's story.<sup>1</sup> George was lunching at the Carlton and he heard a man at the next table say: "This morning they offered me India!" To bring the conversation down to my level I told the story of Gerald Ames, who had social pretensions, saying: "I spent Tuesday at the Belvoir Kennels," and Peter Page replying:

<sup>1</sup> As these pages go to press, sign comes that the wit and gaiety of my old friend are to have continuance. His son John has become editor of the *University of London Union Magazine*. He begins his review of Cecil B. de Mille's film, *Cleopatra*: "Most intelligent people like sometimes to take an evening off and enjoy two hours of blood, lust and elephants." I foresee a future for John provided he renounces wit, which in this country is fatal. He has not his father's charm, and could not be expected to have; but he will be a terrifying fellow some day, if his brows beetle as they threaten to.

"Sounds like Shoe Lane!" Previously had cocktails at Morris Harvey's flat in Yeoman's Row and at lunch told the story of how I said to Nevinson: "Let's talk about ourselves. I think my articles are damned good. What do you think of your pictures?" Nevinson replied: "Better!"

Other events of the week are that George Moore died. Have never been enthusiastic about him since his early days. Probably my fault. Saintsbury also died at a terrific age, and Galsworthy is very ill. Charles Morgan is to write Moore's life. Nothing good in the theatre except Mordaunt Shairp's *The Green Bay Tree*. Shall a young man marry a poor girl or act as companion to an elderly homosexual? Ultimately the boy's father shoots the dear old fellow, whereupon the boy inherits the money and goes queer. An odd play, extremely witty and amusing throughout. Ivor Brown praised the Censor for coming out of his shell; my belief is that the Lord Chamberlain hadn't the vaguest notion what shell he was coming out of.

Cochran's new musical comedy *Mother of Pearl* turned out to be the last word in tedium. Herbert's book clever but not *funny*, and the music dull and undistinguished. Delysia brilliant and hard as usual.

St. John Ervine gave *My Theatre Talks* a very good show in the *Observer*—1½ columns. Asked whether the second "h" in Tchekhov was a printer's error, and why I stuck in the "T". St. John apparently doesn't know that this is Constance Garnett's spelling in the Chatto & Windus edition. The dear fellow cannot believe that anybody except himself can be right about anything.

*Feb. 18.* Nothing much has happened except that I swopped the Talbot for a Vauxhall sports 23/80 coupé, done only 6,000 miles and in grand condition. Registered May 1931 and I gave £25 for the swop. Also bought a picture by Coxon for £10 and another by Allan Walton for £10 and another by Claud Rogers for £5, making £25 worth of car and £25 worth of art. Reasonable extravagances, I hope, and I square my conscience by calling them investments.

*Feb.* 19. Motored to Brighton with George Bishop, who can sit in a dicky with a better grace than anybody I know. It turned out to be Harry Preston's birthday, whereby our lunch table blossomed out into gold-topped bottles. Bishop told me this story : On the evening of the Sunday on which Alan Parsons died, Joan Clement Scott, grand-daughter of the critic, was selling programmes at a show given by the Repertory Players at the Savoy Theatre. She saw Alan standing by the side of the stalls, which was his habit, and knowing him to be a critic gave him a programme which he took. It was not until two hours later that she heard he had died that morning. She stuck to her story, however, and is not known to be a hysterical subject. A prosaic explanation is that she mistook somebody else for Alan, though she swears not. Returned from Brighton about 6, and spent the rest of the evening reading Hugh Edwards's *All Night at Mr. Stanyhurst's*, which I take to be very little short of a masterpiece.

*Feb.* 20. Lunched with Lionel Fielden and Cecil Madden, both of the B.B.C. Fielden told me of a lively bit of dialogue at a dinner-party an evening or two ago.

A BRIGADIER. There must always be righteous wars.

FIELDEN. What in your opinion, sir, would be a righteous war ?

BRIGADIER. Damn it, a war to prevent naked savages raping one's womenfolk !

FIELDEN. The first time a naked savage lays a finger on Mrs. Culverin I give you my word, General, I'll enlist !

True story : The Mayor of some Lancashire town being presented with a pair of statues for the Town Hall remarked after inspecting the nude figures : " Art is art, and nothing can be done to prevent it. But there is the Mayoress's decency to be considered ! "

*Feb.* 21. News to hand of the death abroad of J. B. Fagan, a moderate playwright and a first-class producer and man of the theatre. Possessed of great culture and a most



kindly, lovable man. Earle Welby also died to-day. Perhaps our finest literary critic, and a wit. The *Week-end Review* will not be able to replace him. The toll among literary men of distinction has been too high lately.

*Feb. 24.* Dined with Reginald Purbrick, who is an amateur of boxing and has a house in Green Street crammed with every luxury including expensive, Victorian pictures. An excellent dinner—turtle soup, fillet of beef, and a first-class Cheddar cheese. Good champagne and better brandy. Among the guests Charlie Cochran, who has stopped sulking over my notice of Delysia, and young Birkenhead, who seems to have inherited all of his father's off-hand manner and some of his brains. Went to the Albert Hall and saw Jack Petersen beat the German Gührling, or some such name, on points. Gührling was defenceless in the 10th round and P. hit him some sixty times but could not put him out. I don't think P. would last three rounds with a Sharkey or stand up for one with a Dempsey or Tunney or even a Carpentier. Supped at the Savoy with Frank Jeans, the surgeon and brother of Ronald Jeans. I told him how bored I get with people who will talk to me about the theatre, and he told me how people will tell him about their operations and what they said under the anæsthetic. I said I was very nervy but supposed I ought to be thankful I hadn't any serious complaint. He agreed and showed me this telegram giving his next day's programme at a Liverpool Hospital :

APPENDICETOMY DIATHERMY EPITHELIOMA PYELOGRAPHY  
CYSTOSCOPY QUERY PROSTATECTOMY CALCIFIED HAEMANGIONA = HANLEY.

This made me feel ashamed.

Gumming this telegram into my Diary I remembered that I wrote yesterday to Max :

74 Kensington Gardens Square,  
London, W.2,  
Feb. 23rd, '33.

DEAR MAX BEERBOHM,

It has been on my mind for some time that I have never answered your last critical and appreciative letter about the

Anthology. To repair this I have sent you a novel <sup>1</sup> published this week which has delighted me greatly. I do not know anybody except you who could have written it, and very few other people who are entitled to read it. I know nothing of the author except that he writes and writes and writes. There is no *arrière pensée* behind this gift except the desire to while away one of your evenings—and if you write to say you have read nothing better since *East Lynne* I shall not print it except in my Diary and then only if my executors approve.

Yours sincerely,

JAMES AGATE.

P.S. Did you see that G. B. S. has gone to the Wall of China by aeroplane?

*Feb. 26.* Very bad news last night about my brother Sydney.

He is dangerously ill at Carmarthen and I shall probably have to go. The roads are impassable owing to the snow-storm, said to be the worst blizzard in this country for 50 years. The train from Fishguard was 14 hours late and the Royal Scot 5½ hours late. The passengers on the latter went up to the driver and stoker and thanked them and shook their hands.

*March 2.* A dreadful four days. Left for Carmarthen on

Monday evening in response to an urgent 'phone. Left Paddington at 5.55, arrived Carmarthen 2 o'clock. Sydney died at 7 o'clock that evening. I had only seen him twice in fifteen years, and in a family which is a family that doesn't seem to make any difference. Edward had gone to Carmarthen on Saturday evening and Gustave arrived from Manchester and Harry from Wakefield on the next day, Tuesday. Sydney never recovered consciousness and had no pain. I was struck by the legend Sydney had made of himself. He was universally beloved in Carmarthen, and yesterday everybody in the town showed some sign of mourning, even complete strangers wearing a black tie. But perhaps they were not strangers. He appears to have known everybody. His landlady had not been out of the house for 15 years, owing to a disfigurement, and had mothered

<sup>1</sup> *All Night at Mr. Stanyhurst's*, by Hugh Edwards.

him throughout all that time, and he had been fond of her. He was her sole communication with the outside world. When things happen like this I seem to feel nothing and to be a mere spectator. Watching through the chinks in the blind I noted how the undertaker's men laughed and joked among themselves, but quietly. Also noted that the hearse bore the address of the firm with its 'phone number! The service was in the Unitarian Chapel. No altar, only a table with flowers on it, and none of the comfortable pomp of a church. I chose "Lead Kindly Light" with the setting that begins on one note repeated three times, and not the ascending one. The singing of this by the Welsh congregation was overpowering. The burial took place in the cemetery, a lovely spot with many fir trees and commanding a view of the hills. Sydney once said he wanted to be buried there. They spelled his name on the plate incorrectly, of course. One cannot supervise everything. He was fifty-one, and enjoyed his life immensely. Every lawyer and barrister who ever met him always testified that he had a terrific legal brain, and they almost always used the word "genius". One day his partner came into his room and told Sydney the details of a case he was taking into court that morning. My brother said: "You're wrong. But the Judge won't see it." His partner won his case.

*March 3.* Dined at Café Royal with Monty. Bought a delicious picture by Morland Lewis. Two navvies road-mending. £10.

*March 4.* Called at Monty's for a cocktail. Immediately proceeded to fall foul of a Bright Young Thing who, asking my advice, confessed to wanting to be a film-star while, apparently, caring nothing at all for acting. Supped at the Savage with Buckie Taylor. Talked over old days on the *Manchester Guardian*.

*March 6.* Spent the morning with Dame Madge Kendal, who will be 84 in a week's time. The old lady was in tremendous fettle and looking as imposing as ever. With the

exception of Queen Victoria she must be the greatest English public monument since Boadicea. Her voice was ringing and full, her gestures magnificent and her sense of humour quite unimpaired. I took with me a little silver basket of camellias and forget-me-nots, like one of her old bonnets. The object of the visit was to arrange for her appearance in my new series of broadcast talks : " Stars in their Courses ". I wanted her to do *The Likeness of the Night*, to which she objected that there are no good speeches for her. The same with the old comedies, and as for the *Lady of Lyons*, it appears the effect is visual and depends on her play of shoulder. The real reason is that the old lady insists upon playing Rosalind, in which I am told she was always not *bad* but something different, *not Rosalind*. A young man called to tune the piano, and Dame Madge didn't object. I did, and strongly, saying I didn't hear her voice often enough to have so great a pleasure spoiled. We got on like two houses on fire. Apropos of the Queen she said : " That's a good woman. I used to read to her grandmother, the old Duchess of Cambridge."

*March 8.* Went to bed late last night after a *very* nervy day—all to pieces. Read in Mathews's *Life* for an hour and considerably comforted by this passage written by Mathews the Younger :

My father was of a remarkably sensitive temperament, quick in his speech and manner, and his nerves seemed hung on elastic wires, which the slightest touch agitated. The falling of a spoon on the sideboard, or the jingling of glasses, would shake him to his foundation. His irritability was excited by the veriest trifles, while he would bear real misfortune with perfect philosophy. And yet, in the midst of a frenzy of passion, such was his keen sense of humour, that one touch of the ridiculous, like a drop of oil on troubled water, would restore his equanimity in a moment.

As Mathews *père* speaks of his " invincible hypochondria " I think he must have been very like me.

Lunched with Charles Laughton, who asks my advice as to whether he shall join the Old Vic. with Flora Robson.

Won't play Falstaff, whom he hates. "I had to throw too many of his kind out of our hotel when I was sixteen." Is making a Henry VIII picture and intends to show him not as a phallus with a crown but as the morbid, introspective fellow he actually was. Very tired to-day. So, hearing that Tony Baerlein had written a long letter to Jock explaining why *Cavalcade* is a bad film, I commandeered it and made my *Tatler* article out of it.

*March 7.* Letter from Buckie Taylor :

61 *Fleet Street*,  
E.C.4.  
*March 6, 1933.*

MY DEAR JAMES,

When, in the club the other day, we talked about the "Manchester Guardian", I wondered if you quite understood how much its power and prestige came from the reporting staff.

I occupied a very minor position in the office when the "Guardian" was largely produced by reporters; giants at their game, most of them. They were the finest reporters in the world. Whoever spoke to a "Guardian" man could depend upon being reported accurately and decently. They didn't make news—they stated facts. Something fine and high in the collective minds of the reporting staff did more than anything else to give the "Guardian" its special quality.

Shovelton and Biggs were the doyens. Shovelton was such a brilliant speech-taker that he could take a full note of Gladstone, Rosebery, Salisbury or Balfour without seeming to exert himself in the slightest degree. He put most of the lesser orators into good English. He used very contracted Pitman—the contractions being largely his own. But his greatest faculty was that he could dictate immediately to a fellow-reporter a half-column, whole-column or column-and-a-half summary of a five-column speech, while preserving exactly the continuity, phraseology and content. Biggs, like Shovelton, was a smallish man, with an intermittent beard and uncertain pince-nez. His shorthand was so small and precise that he would have caused Isaac Pitman to use his magnifying-glass.

Then there was Paton, dark, dapper and so sartorially

correct that he might have given hints to King Edward and John Roberts. He had little to say to anybody, delivered his "copy" and walked out, not to be seen again in the office until his next engagement. Cash, the chief reporter, wore a longish beard. He spoke little even to his own men. They were marked for their engagements, they delivered their "copy" silently on his desk and walked out, returning the next day to look at the book of engagements. Cash was not a brilliant man, but a wonderful chief reporter. Do you know the difference between a good reporter and a chief reporter? Well, Cash could not have put the palest glow on the best crime story that ever broke. One always felt of him that it would be futile to send him out on a job, that he was much better employed sending out the right men who could do the job better.

About that time Filson Young used to call at the office every day with a paragraph about the Ship Canal. His "stick" of copy was generally a little literary gem. It was thought so much of that it always appeared "leaded". Perhaps the man who marked the new era in "Guardian" reporting was Willie Haslam Mills, son of the ex-music critic and a native of Stalybridge. Mills blew into the cathedral atmosphere of Cross Street like a combination of d'Artagnan and Villon, and he looked a bit like both. It remained for him to discover the English music-hall. Of all the papers in the world the "Guardian" seemed the least likely to tolerate such a venture, but it became a great feature. It was a joy to read Mills's why and wherefore of Wilkie Bard's greatness, of Marie Lloyd's genius, of Eugene Stratton's artistry and even of Lew Lake's peculiarly Cockney histrionic qualities. Mills nearly became an actor, yet his chief claim to fame is that he wrote the "copy" and suggested the idea of the famous Buoyant Chair advertisement. His phrase "Kenneth, get up and let your father sit down" was, to my mind, one of the most effective and apt lines ever put into an advertisement.

"Manchester Guardian" reporters were the envy of all Northern newspaper men. The starting wage was £4 a week! Yes, James, these were not only "Manchester Guardian" makers, but truly "gentlemen of the Press".

Sincerely,

W. BUCHANAN TAYLOR.

*March 9.* Lunched with Seymour Hicks at the Garrick. I told him I was the only dramatic critic at all well known who was not a member, and said I didn't suppose they would have me at any price. Seymour agreed! In terrific form and made me laugh at funeral stories for an hour and a half!

*March 10.* Shaw's plays are the price we pay for Shaw's prefaces.

*March 12.* Drove José Levy to lunch at Colville Hall. Peter Page in excellent form and wearing the oldest and dirtiest clothes. After lunch slept and snored out of doors without coats *and with smoked glasses to protect us from the sun.* Critics' Circle dinner at night. Very good speech by Charles Morgan and a witty, slightly too long, effort by A. P. Herbert. Irene Vanbrugh and John Gielgud also spoke. And then Arthur Bliss, who delivered himself of some Dada-ish nonsense. At my table were Edie Craig (Edie is rehearsing H. A. Jones's *The Liars* and says she cannot get to-day's players to hit the *artificial* note required by mannered comedy). Also Herman Finck, George Bishop, Pulvermacher and some nondescripts. Lilian Braithwaite was not there, so I conclude she is dead! Ordered the only bottle of champagne at the dinner and drank it all myself! Afterwards with Nevinson to Margery Binner's flat. Portrait of her by Nevinson, and pestered to say what I thought of it. Said it was like Frances Doble. Binner's face is wee, round, dimpled, childish and rogue-in-porcelain or front-row-chorus; Nevinson has drawn a long, angular, heroic, classic design for Minerva. They weren't too pleased.

*March 13.* Seymour rang up while I was still in bed to say he wants to do part of *Richard III* on the wireless. I said if he did that I would get Benson to give us some light comedy. Got up to find a coffee-coloured mist hardly amounting to fog, which lasted all day.

*March 14.* Lunched with Peters to-day, in good spirits and quite recovered from his wretched illness. Frank Vosper came up and told us that the Shuberts had offered the

part of Mr. Dulcy in the American production of *The Green Bay Tree* to Nigel Bruce!!!! He is not going to write again until he can produce something "so perfect that I shall be satisfied with it whatever the world thinks".

I saw in some paper last week the statement that the chief delight in doing a job is having it behind one, and knowing it won't have to be done again! I disagree. I believe that the old charwoman who desired for her epitaph:

Don't pity me now,  
Don't pity me never;  
I'm going to do nothing  
For ever and ever

was a self-deceiver. At least I will lay odds that anybody meeting her in Heaven will find her scrubbing marble and dusting porphyry with a new-born gleam in her old eye. I do not believe that the Creator's feeling about the Universe is relief in having finished the job, and knowing it will not have to be done again. I believe that creation is unceasing, and that, if it were not, day and night would cease to be. My experience is that we are all of us grumbling about not being happy while continuing in an orgy of indifference and inefficiency. Last week my new-cut latch-key would not go into the lock. Last month I had my study measured for a carpet which on arrival swarmed up the walls. I have just ordered some summer vests and I feel it in my bones that pants will arrive. The world's worker of to-day works no harder than is necessary to enable him to shuffle off to the pictures, not realising that if he put more heart into his work he would have more zest stored up for play. Never mind something attempted; something done is worth a night out. People may say that I am a writer, and presumably enjoy working, and ask me to suppose that I sold gloves, or kept other people's accounts, or laid tables, or scraped boilers? My answer would still be the same. Is it supposed that the dramatic critic putting on a boiled shirt on Saturday night when he was hoping for a week-end is any better pleased than the mechanic slipping into his dungarees on Monday morning after a week-end no employer dare destroy? Were I engaged in those other trades I should try every day to be more obliging,



accurate, deft, and expeditious than ever before. This is my personal experience : There is only one way whereby I can endure the dog-labour and hell's torment of writing, and that is by working at every article as though it were the first I have ever written. Analogies are treacherous things, but there is one I can't resist. The captain of an ocean-going ship may owe his tailor and possess too many wives in too many ports. But in getting his ship from one side of the ocean to the other that captain has achieved something. Every man, in my view, has a ship, and that is his job. Let him bring that ship safely to port and it matters less that the waters through which he has brought it may have been muddy. We cannot be perfect beings, but we can all do our job perfectly, or with such perfection as lies within our personal competence. Noble natures may descant after their fashion about the nobility of this ; as a practical philosopher my point is that the only enduring happiness comes through work. It may be true that " there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest ". But that is only half the verse, for the other half runs : " Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." With our might, therefore, though we have not " any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun ".

In the meantime it is a chastening thought that, despite the foregoing, and because I was too lazy to look it up, I recently attributed " Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't " to Macbeth instead of to his lady.

*March 15.* Fritz Dehn and Cochran and Peter Page to lunch at Boulestin's. £4 17s. 6d. without champagne. Nobody in good form, except that Peter Page said of the small wines of France that like Gerald du Maurier they won't tour. Party at Alec Rea's. All the theatre-folk there. Absurdly hot and no champagne.

*March 16.* Margaret Bannerman reappears in a shockingly silly play called *Gay Love*. Has enormously im-

proved. Took van Thal to supper at the Savoy. Read van T. selections from one of Jock's stories—the one called *Tower Music*.

Jock tells me he has had an offer from a publisher to write the life of Noel Coward. I asked why he was invited and not me. He replied, "Because I am a rising young man and you are a declining old one!"

*March 17.* Charming letter from Bernard Darwin because of my review of his little *Life of Dickens*. Delighted, presumably, because I did *not* say that a single page of Chesterton on the Immortal One puts him to bed. Still "noble tomfoolery" is good. Also "C. D. was the son of Mr. Micawber and Mrs. Nickleby". In his letter Darwin says that Little Nell is a little pig, and that Peepy Jellyby is a dear.

*March 18.* Motored Geoffrey Bennett to Southend. He wanted to see some ponies belonging to a milkman, a Mr. Phillips. At first I flatly refused to get out of the car. Then I wavered and finally fell. One was a *magnificent* goer but lacked quality. The rest were rubbish till we came to a little brown stallion, four years old, unshod, and as lovely a little fellow as I have ever looked on. The perfection of quality and outline, with a marvellous front. He is by Bricket Fusilier, the unbeaten 2,300 guinea pony at two years old and I forget how much more later. Fusilier was by Fusee by Mel-Valley's Fame by Royal Success. The pony's dam is Holland Verbena (a beauty) by Royal Success, g.dam Naughty Naiad by Berkeley Model, g.g.dam Sylva by Donal Grant. (It gives me a thrill to write down all the old names.) And Fusilier's dam, Colne Marvel, was by Gentleman John, the best-looking Hackney of all time which gave Fusilier his Hackney instead of pony look. Now this little chap had not only all his father's beauty but pony character as well. I made up my mind to have him as soon as I set eyes on him. Exquisite conformation and classic breeding—what more could anybody want? Action? He *must* be able to go, but we couldn't see that as he was unshod and shown in a yard. Anyhow, I couldn't resist him, and perhaps he will take my attention off myself.

*March 20.* Driving down to B.B.C. I said to Arthur Wright, the new chauffeur : " We are going to see my life's sweet-heart, Dame Madge Kendal, who was 84 last week." He said, " Would she be a maiden lady, sir ? "

" What must I do ? " asked Dame Madge, wearing a puce bed-jacket and a bonnet with geraniums and strings. " You are to be Rosalind," said Henry Oscar, " and "—pointing to the microphone—" there's your Orlando ! " " My husband was better looking ! " said the gay old girl. She stood at the mike for twenty-five minutes, reading the part in typescript through an immense magnifying-glass. The Epilogue she did by heart. All very fine but enormously slow and Siddons-like. It was characteristic of her to insist on doing the one part in which she had comparatively failed. She so overwhelmed everybody that one of the higher intellectuals of the B.B.C., searching frantically in his Shakespeare for the Epilogue, asked me what Act it was in !

Benson called on me in the afternoon to discuss what he should do in this series. Told me he has given up football but still plays hockey. Also something about walking seven miles every day. Still a wonderful figure, with an austere face like a prelate with dyspepsia. I little thought when as a boy of twelve I saw him play Orlando to his wife's Rosalind that one day he would call on me ! Benson spoke the first words of Shakespeare I heard on the stage : " As I remember, Adam, it was upon this fashion."

*March 22.* Pony's pedigree arrived. I note that the g.g.g.dam was Bounce, whose history and epitaph I gave in *Alarums and Excursions*.

Letter from Filson Young has turned up :

2 Campden Grove,  
Kensington, W.8.  
17 March, 1933.

DEAR JIMMIE,

You have won—or I have won—or we both have won—I don't remember the terms of our bet, except that it involved a luncheon—and I think I bet that I would agree with you. Well, *All Night* etc. is a *little masterpiece*. You



*Réjane*



were right—and I have involved myself in three other bets to the same end. But it was a piece of alert discernment on your part. What narrative! Where did this language come from? His is an entirely different *dimension* from other writing except *Lady into Fox*. A similar technique. But how exquisitely detached from current formulæ.

Thank you.

FILSON.

As Max did not acknowledge receipt of the book I conclude he never got it.<sup>1</sup>

*March 23.* Gave Seymour Hicks and George Bishop lunch.

Seymour in very good form. What a mimic and pantomimist the man is!

Have decided to call the pony "Champagne".

Discovered among my papers this bill from Jock:

TABLE OF COSTS IN RESPECT OF PUBLISHED BOOK OF  
BROADCAST TALKS BY JAMES AGATE

from his Secretary,  
Alan Dent

Thursday,	17th Nov. 1932. . . .	To perusing the entire Talks; to creaming them, as dairymen say, and setting aside some seventy of them for more detailed consideration . . . . .
Saturday,	19th Nov. . . .	To following after the author's perusing of the set-aside seventy, with pen, with rubber, with type-writer; to re-typing some few much-altered pages . . . . .
Tuesday,	22nd Nov. . . .	To erasing, and writing, and re-typing many more such pages, so that the Printer may not be perplexed . . . . .
Saturday,	26th Nov. and	
Sunday,	27th Nov. . . .	To reading the whole length of the Book—the place being Southend and the

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Max saying he had read *All Night at Mr. Stanhurst's* with delight, twice, arrived eighteen months later just as the proofs of this book were being corrected.

weather septic ; to paragraphing it throughout ;  
to keeping an eagle eye open for an Allusion  
repeated or an illustrative Tale duplicated .  
Wednesday, 30th Nov. . . . To patience in the composi-  
tion of the lengthy Preface—later much short-  
ened—and to its typing and re-typing and partial  
re-re-typing . . . . .  
Saturday, 3rd Dec. . . . To concluding the Task, making  
a table of contents, numbering the pages,  
parcelling and despatching the Entire Thing .  
Thursday, 22nd Dec. . . . To revising the corrected  
Proofs, galling the kibe of the Corrector ; to  
ascertaining and verifying a thousand references  
Friday, 23rd Dec. . . . To that same process con-  
tinued half into the night . . . . .  
Thursday, 29th Dec. . . . To the process continued unto  
the End . . . . .  
1933. . . . To any thing that may still be to do in connec-  
tion with the aforesaid Book . . . . .

.....

Five Guineas.

.....

*March 24.* Returned to Westcliff for the summer. Shall use  
the London flat as little as possible.

*March 26.* Rather amusing day.

Lunched at the Savage : cold beef, asparagus  
and a pint of Pol Roger. Very good. Took Elliott to a con-  
cert of Russian music at the Palladium. Really went to hear  
a piano concerto by Dohnanyi, but it turned out to be Rach-  
maninov No. 2. So I slept. Then Irene Scharrer played that  
*bloody* Ballade in A flat, of which I am tired though I liked it when  
I played it myself. She was in poorish form and, I thought,  
vulgarised it, with some wrong notes. Best thing in the per-  
formance was Moussorgsky's " Pictures from an Exhibition ".  
Glazounov's " Carneval " is dull after Berlioz and Dvorák, and  
so is Dvorák. Wood conducted, looking more than ever like a  
taller brother of Willie Clarkson and wearing what, except  
for undertakers, must be the last frock-coat in London. Thin

house. Elliott sniffed and snuffed throughout, which I thought very Russian of him.

*March 28.* Looking back, I find that my most cherished recollection is of my four-year-old brother Harry rushing to meet me and toddling downstairs as fast as his legs would carry him. This was on one of my returns from Giggleswick. As far as I am concerned he is still the same age.

*March 29.* Watched clever and charming Irene Vanbrugh record her stuff for "Stars in their Courses". Asked her to change, in *Gay Lord Quex* scene, "Maurewarde" to "her lover Maurewarde", to make-it easier for the public which does not know the play. She said she thought she could do it, but didn't seem any too certain. Even the best of these people are very odd; once they have learnt a part it seems they do it parrot-wise and an alteration puts them out.

When I got home found that somebody had sent me the current number of *Comœdia* with a picture of Sarah as Phèdre in 1913 and an enormous heading "IL Y A DIX ANS AUJOURD'HUI SARAH BERNHARDT MOURAIT".

*March 30.* Settling down quietly at Westcliff, which of course makes me feel ill. One is all right as long as one goes on racketting. Shall just have to wait till the nerves quieten down. Doctor says minimum of drink, but not to make a martyr of myself. In the last five days total consumption 5 glasses of mild ale and one pint of fizz.

Decided to paint outside of house bright apple green for the woodwork and make the stucco cream. Saw decorator and asked for estimate. Wrote goodish article for *S.T.*, not top-notch but will do. Subjects: a play about Walter Scott and a musical comedy based on *Ambrose Applejohn's Adventure*.

Landlord called and I think I persuaded him to pay half the cost of decorating. Good concert on wireless. Strauss's "Don Quixote" from Birmingham. Never heard it before. Pure haschich, or hashish, however you spell it. First-class shoulder of mutton at ten o'clock and a pudding that smelled of the washing and tasted like hair-oil but otherwise excellent.



Had the good luck to pick up Beethoven No. 5 *after* the slow movement. Read enough of a travel book by one de Valda to give it a middling notice and of a volume of sketches by E. M. Delafield to give it an ecstatic one. Turned in at 12.30 exactly. Surely fresh air, golf, hardly any drink, less tobacco than usual, and early hours with an interest in simple things should make a difference if persisted in. If I could only stop this bloody thinking about myself!

*April 13.* Have spent most of the past fortnight rowing with the B.B.C. A minor point raised by me was that I attempted to deliver to the B.B.C., at its own request, the original script of *The Only Way*. Arriving at seven o'clock and the Talks Department having closed, I handed the parcel to the Commissionaire at the reception desk and declared its value, sentimental and in cash, saying I didn't suppose Sir John Martin-Harvey would lose it for a thousand pounds. Whereupon the stout fellow declined the responsibility and I had to wait until somebody could be found to take it home for safe-keeping. Whereupon I wrote to the B.B.C. suggesting that Eric Gill should design them a cupboard to match Prospero and Ariel. "A navel would make an admirable keyhole!"

Also wrote to *The Times* which had announced the death of somebody at his London address *and* his country seat. Asked if it was not adding to Death's terrors to make a man die twice over.

*April 14.* Bergel drove me down to Southend. Lunched at the Palace and afterwards played golf at Orsett. Bergel was seldom on the course, but as I never played better in my life we beat the pro. who gave us three bisques. I told B. he must come down again and have a round *on* the course. He told me two good stories. A friend of his meeting Manet in his last years asked him if he remembered George Moore. Manet said he did, adding, "Ce pauvre George Moore! Il était si embêtant!"

The other story was the plea put forward at the Southend police-court by a drunk: "The boys insisted on going to

Canvey Island and it was the thought of leaving me native land as started it."

Apart from golf—B. is in the long-hitting stage of the game—he was thoroughly amusing. So I told him my idea for a play on the Stanley Baldwins, taking Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln* as model. In the last scene Baldwin, having lost the election and his job, can't keep up the instalments on his furniture which is on the H.P. system. The play ends with Mrs. B. fingering the sideboard and saying, "Now it belongs to Drage's!"

They have quite spoiled the bandstand here. It used to be an informal little affair with festoons of coloured electric bulbs. Now they have enclosed it in shelters lit in the manner of the new Café Royal and quite horrid. Arrived to-night in time for an interminable piccolo solo, which wouldn't be ignored, followed by the interval. So I came back to work and an angry staff, furious because I declined to eat shoulder of mutton immediately on top of a huge tea at the golf links. Of all people I find cooks the most unreasonable. Shall have some semi-cold slices about eleven o'clock with half a bottle of fizz to cheer me up. I made the staff have dinner, of course, so why the hell they should sulk I don't know as I am quite prepared to get my own supper. The more I see of the working-classes the more I am convinced that communism, though right in theory, is bosh in practice.

*April 15.* Received humourless reply from *The Times*.

*May 1.* May tells me this. "One day during my first winter in Paris Sarah asked Mamma and me to lunch. It was a very good lunch, except that the fish was sweet. Madame Sarah, sitting in the carved oak chair in which she was so often photographed, turned to Mamma on her right and said: '*Ne le mangez pas, chère Madame Agathe. J'ai une très bonne cuisinière, seulement elle se soûle.*' Then to the rest of us with a shrug: '*Quand on se soûle on ne garde tout-de-même pas le sel et le sucre à côté l'un de l'autre—on les mets aux deux bouts de la cuisine!*' And smilingly, to the butler: '*Dites-le-lui de ma part.*'"

*May 11.* Events of past month. Have engaged a Yorkshire cook, deaf and with a glass eye, but a worker.

B.B.C. capitulated.

Bought an exquisite black mare from Albert Throup, and named her Black Tulip. My interest in these two animals now exceeds everything. *Totally* indifferent to golf, plays, films, books, music. Don't think of anything else and go every week-end to see them at Birmingham. "How other passions fleet to air!"

Two witty things :

Agreeing that in middle-age carnality is difficult to give up Leo said : "The flesh is willing but the spirit is weak!"

Monty Shearman said of somebody : "I feel that if he got to know me better, I should dislike him!"

*June 17.* Have not given a thought to this diary for a whole month, having been wholly preoccupied with the horses. Tulip has won 2nd at Oxford, 1st at Bath and West, two thirds at National Hackney Show at Bournemouth, and 1st at Leicester. Champagne was 4th at the National in a huge class of pony stallions. Satisfied.

Went up to Alderley Edge to adjudicate at a Dramatic Festival. Left London about noon, dined with some nice people, dutifully absorbed a lecture by brother Mycroft on the first principles of adjudication, adjudicated, supped, and started back for town at one in the morning, arriving about six—all this to get to Wimbledon show by midday. Tulip won her class here.

Finished Bennett's Diary, and no mention of me that matters. A little disappointed. But then I never thought Arnold thought much of me.

Letter from Sybil Thorndike :

74 Oakley Street,  
S.W.3.  
Saturday, June 3.

MY DEAR JIMMY,

I'm doing what I've no business to—and quite probably you will curse me. You're a critic but as you insultingly

say that I'm a "dear" before I'm an actress (!! ) so I say you're my friend before a critic !! Quits now ! You do make muckers every time you come to a play that has *passion* other than *love* passion. I don't honestly believe you know what a burning passion is apart from honest-to-God love between man and woman, and I grant that you have that big understanding where all human relationships are concerned. The Brontë play of Clemence Dane doesn't come in that category really, and I don't believe you understand Clemence Dane's burning white-hot passion at all. I don't believe many theatre people *do* when that passion is being used in the theatre, and it nearly always fails because only a few understand it, and it is *never* helped by the critics, just because the plays are not always quite right somehow. *The Verge* by Susan Glaspell, my abnormal play about The Dark Saint which you've probably forgotten, *St. Joan*—only that succeeded for some unknown reason—and all Clemence Dane's plays except *Divorcement*. I do think you might own occasionally that you don't understand certain types of women's minds—there are a lot of us who have other deep burning passions as well as the one one gives in love, and I think you've none of you been fair over the Brontë play that Diana Wynyard is doing so *beautifully* ! I do think your criticism is so wonderful and we all welcome it and do try to learn from it but you make this play sound *dull*, and it's not dull. It gave me for one the biggest kick I've had since being home and I'm a good average playgoer.

Forgive this and *don't* answer. You're such a darling, and I do enjoy a yarn with you and I *never* get it, and I long to argue certain things because you love the Theatre and I love it beyond all things—nearly !

Yours affectionately,

SYBIL THORNDIKE.

This letter is too vague and incoherent but I shall send it. Don't curse me !

June 18. Went to B'ham and saw Champagne in harness. Shall keep him for stud.

June 19. Esmé Percy called and gave me a large portrait of Sarah playing draughts (?) with her manager (?) both of them moving the pieces with knitting needles ! Sarah

looks ineffable in black lace dress and picture hat of the early nineteen hundreds. The manager is a most monstrous, Crippen-like little Frenchman—frock-coat, deep collar, bow tie, pince-nez and two rings, the kind of thing Rousseau painted and Tristan Bernard used to write serious novels about.

*June 20.* Took W. E. Barber of *Country Life* to lunch at the Ivy. Basil Murray came up and this conversation happened :

J. A. What did you think of the play last night ? (Obey's *Loire*.)

B. M. I thought it might be the issue of Euripides and Gertrude Stein.

W. E. B. With Gilbert Murray as midwife !

B. M. That is my father !

W. E. B. (*unperturbed*). One of his less successful accouchements, don't you think ?

Motored to King's Lynn for Royal Norfolk Show. Dined at Duke's Head. No bedrooms anywhere in the town. Proposed to go on to Hunstanton. Landlord said Sandringham Hotel *full up* but would 'phone Lestrangle Arms. Did so and reported they had reserved rooms. Jolly evening with Bennett and Albert Throup, who bet me 10/- we should beat Wensleydale Madge. At 12 p.m. Lestrangle Arms 'phoned that they kept no night-porter and would shut me out if I didn't come at once. Left and knocked up night-porter at Sandringham to enquire where Lestrangle Arms might be. Received directions. Spent 1 hour trying to find it. No luck. Saw large reflection advertising Glebe Hotel, A.A. and all the rest of it. Rang and knocked. No answer. 3 a.m. Back to Sandringham. Could we have two sofas ? Why sofas ? Plenty of bedrooms ! We occupied rooms 7 and 8 on first floor. Charming country to travel in !

*June 21.* Tulip made a grand show and was second to Fleetwood Nanette, beating Wensleydale Madge (costing me my bet of 10/-) and three others. In championship class stood 3rd to Morton's Vitality and Nanette. As both

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I LIE ON IT

these had previously won a Hackney Society Harness medal Tulip won this. She hardly broke at all, and showed the most classic action seen out for ten years. A champion in the making and all she wants is time.

Hurry home and am promptly sick.

Telegram and letter addressed to me at B.B.C.

Telegram says : " Please cut cackle. You are not a Christopher Stone."

Letter is complimentary and addressed " Sir James Agate ". A bit " previous ", as the servant-girls say.

June 22. Two letters about Edith Sitwell's *The English Eccentrics* :

74 Kensington Gardens Square,  
W.2.

26th May, 1933.

DEAR MISS SITWELL,

I have been reading with the greatest interest your fascinating book, *The English Eccentrics*. But one passage in it puzzles me extremely. You close your account of Mytton like this :

" I hope that this pitiful creature has found a warm, country heaven of horses and hounds, an old and kindly heaven of country habits and country sweetness, with heavenly mansions where he and Baronet can sit by the fire together once more, horse and man, and where the master can forget the dirt and wretchedness of the debtor's prison, and the eight bottles of port a day, and all the ancient foolishness."

But surely the last three lines should run :

" . . . where the master can forget the dirt and wretchedness of the debtor's prison, and *remember* the eight bottles of port a day and all the ancient foolishness."

Mytton without the port and the foolishness is nothing. They are Mytton ; Mytton is only going to be happy as long as he is Mytton. Turn him into Michael Angelo and he will be miserable.

Yours sincerely,

JAMES AGATE.

T

EGO

129 *Rue Saint-Dominique,*  
*Paris VII<sup>E</sup>.*

30th May, 1933.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

Thank you so much for your charming letter, which has only just reached me because I am living in Paris for the time.

I am so delighted that you like my *English Eccentrics*, and your point about poor John Mytton interests me very much indeed. I think, now you have pointed it out to me, that "all the ancient foolishness" might have been left to him, but I am not certain about the eight bottles of port. I loathe teetotallers—regarding prohibition as a very mean kind of vice—in fact, the people addicted to it are almost the only people whom I really dislike *en masse*—but the idea of that port upsets me, partly, perhaps, because I have never liked port. One of my brothers inherited four bottles of 1815 port, and one of these bottles was opened in the presence of several old gentlemen, trembling with awe, and myself. Out of politeness, I was endowed with about two teaspoonfuls of this nectar. Having absorbed it, I could not resist making a face. None of the old gentlemen has spoken to me since! Still, if Mytton really wanted to go on with the port, I suppose there is no reason why he shouldn't, in Heaven, at any rate, where I presume one cannot get delirium tremens.

Thanking you again so much for your letter,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

EDITH SITWELL.

June 29. Conversation last night over dinner with Monty Shearman.

M. I was very much astonished, James, when K—who is a real intellectual said he admired your work very much and would like to meet you.

J. A. (*seizing chance*). But, of course, Monty, the real highbrows do like me. It's only the semis, the people who only go to *Othello* if a nigger's in it, the Gate Theatre crowd, who dislike my work because I see through their pretence.

M. K— was one of your supporters about *Cavalcade*.

J. A. *Cavalcade* was an entertainment. I never said it was a work of art, and everybody who isn't a bloody fool agrees with me that it was a rattling good entertainment. I wish you'd get the point that what matters about a critic is what he praises and what he fails to praise. Nothing else counts. In ten years I have never said a play was a work of art when it wasn't, and I haven't missed one that was. *Noé, L'Ame en Peine, Journey's End, Musical Chairs, Martine*—I was first in the field with all of them.

M. K.— says you write well.

J. A. There he's wrong. By hopping about from one bit of gusto to another like a kangaroo I give the illusion of good writing. But that's only because it doesn't bore you. Of what really makes writing—the bone and the muscles under the skin of the prose—I know nothing whatever, no more than I did twenty years ago.

After getting that lot off my chest I felt better !

Aug. 24. This is the last week of my alleged month's summer holidays, during which I have only had to write twelve articles, see all the usual films, and read the usual number of books.

Have spent the month going round the shows with Tulip, whose full record is 2nd Oxfordshire, 1st Bath and West, 3rd National, 1st Leicestershire, 2nd Royal Norfolk, 2nd Royal, 3rd Kent County, 3rd Royal Lancashire, 1st Market Harborough, 3rd Sutton Coldfield, 1st Canwell. She has won just over £80 in prize-money. Put her out to grass a week ago. Went down to Throup's to look again at Tulip's two-year-old full sister. Thought her even better-looking. Black, with two white heels. She is already 14.2, the same height as Tulip and will probably finish round about 15.1½. Head beautifully put on and lovely quality throughout. Owing to difference in height they would not make a pair. But what a tandem, with Tulip in the lead ! Filly is undocked and never had a shoe or a halter on her. Showed me two yards of action, no more. If I am any judge Tulip will always have something of the *retenue* of Mrs. Kendal while the filly may have the luxury and riot of Ellen Terry. Bought her. The



pair should, if they live and are lucky, sweep the board some day.

As this still pretends to be a diary I must not "write up" the past two months. Made a speech at the Benson dinner where I sat next to the old man. Tremendously noble. I mean he was noble, not my speech! My brother Harry told me as we were watching the cricket at Lord's that in my "Stars in their Courses" series Benson indulged in an orgy of false accents. For example, according to Harry, he spoke Mark Antony's line :

Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill

with terrific emphasis on the word "fill" as opposed to "empty"! I don't care a damn. But he made a really grand speech at the Kean Centenary at Drury Lane, that I'll swear.

Aug. 25. How odd people are! My brother Edward said yesterday apropos of Bennett's Diaries, "He went about the world like a baby," not seeing that this constitutes the charm of the Diaries just as the peeping provincialities were the fascination of the man.

Lunched with Graham Browne. Told him about too many nightmares I have had lately. For example I dreamed last night of a terrible motor-smash and seeing the bodies brought back in a bag. Presently one disentangled itself and spoke to me out of a state of dissolution like a battle-field corpse of six months' standing. Not only dead but *conscious of it*. It is this consciousness which fills me with such unbearable horror, and this kind of dream is always occurring. I should like to get this out of my system but won't have truck with psycho-analysts. I told this dream to Willie who said, "Yes. But anybody who can talk about being dead isn't dead."

Dined last night at the Garrick with Monty and agreed that our three days' trip to Scarborough had been comparatively without quarrel. Except in the matter of hotels. He preferred the Pavilion, kept by Charles Laughton's family, where the cuisine is first-class but which looks on to the railway

station. I liked an indifferent little hotel with a lovely view of the North Bay, and where you can see, hear, smell, taste and feel the sea. That is what I go to the sea-side for.

Called on Monty to-day. M. said Pearsall-Smith's *Trivia* was bad because La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* are better. I said M. was a snob, a dilettante and a fool. Is Pett-Ridge bad because Dickens was better? etc., etc. Big row. In the end M. gave me a charming old copy of the *Maximes* with a penitent inscription. And I apologised.

Aug. 27. Went to Clacton, to which town I am still grateful for pulling me round at the time of my nervous breakdown four or five years ago. Lunched at Colchester, and spent the afternoon on the cliff at Frinton reading half-a-dozen books for review. Looked at *Sunday Times* and read two very well-written notices by Eiluned Lewis. *Time I got back to the paper*. A journalist's work fades quickly, and past achievements are of no present use to anybody.

Composed costume suitable for middle-aged sea-side gent. White flannel trousers with black stripe, white socks and shoes, ordinary coloured shirt with white collar, ordinary grey lounge jacket and waistcoat. Panama. This would look all right on Athole Stewart in a modern comedy. Why not on me? Tried a similar get-up on Southend last year, but both towns "rather sneery".

Jock has given me some delightful play-bills which I have put up in the workroom at Westcliff. These include Macready in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* (1833), and Irving's first night of *Eugene Aram* (1873). The last belonged to G. H. Lewes and was bought by Jock from Lewes's daughter, who lives in Nova Scotia. Also Rachel at the St. James's Theatre in *Les Horaces* (1855). This was preceded by a comedy in which Sarah, Lia and Dinah Félix all appeared. Rachel was a good mother to her sisters!

Aug. 28. Ivor Brown, having been terrifically good for weeks, was not quite in best form yesterday. Hopefully asked Jock whether he agreed that Ivor's writing was falling

off. Jock said "No. It's falling on. Get on with your work!" Lunched at Ivy, which was crowded. Asked Abel if anybody was there, meaning theatre-folk. Abel said: "No, sair. Only trash!"

Thought of a middle-page article for the *Daily Express* entitled "My Ideal Day". In my case it would be as follows: I should want to get up so well that I did not think about myself at all (it is a staggering thought that millions of people probably do this every morning). After bacon, in whose gravy two halves of a very small kidney have nicely browned, I tackle the first draft of my *Sunday Times* article, happy in the blessed thought that the week's playgoing is behind me and I have three or four clear days before I need put my nose into a theatre. After cold beef and one glass of beer I snooze for half an hour over coffee and a cigar, while Jock gives a post-prandial recital on the gramophone. (When I asked one day for a particular record, Jock said: "Can ye no listen to a conseedered programme?") I then re-write the *S.T.* article, taking great pains about semicolons and such-like. (Millais once confessed that the only thing he enjoyed about portrait-painting was putting the high-lights on the boots of his subjects; the only thing I really enjoy about writing is the punctuation.) After tea depends upon whether, like a golf course, I am inland or seaside. If I am inland I motor to a course twenty miles away, play a match with the local assistant which ends on the last green, dine somewhere, and am then driven forty miles back to town, rather slowly, in the cool of what has been a very hot day. Then bed. If I am at the sea the same programme holds, except that after a keen match and dinner I listen on pier or promenade to a band playing Strauss waltzes through which the sea can be faintly heard. The bandstand looks as much as possible like a wedding cake, it is brilliantly lit up, moths flutter, and the smoke of one's cigar goes straight up and is very blue. After the crowd has dispersed one goes to sleep on a bench near the hotel, until it is 11 o'clock and it begins to grow cold. Where do the ponies come in? One mustn't be greedy, and in these two ideal days they do not!

Sept. 2. Birmingham. Saw Tulip's sister, and very greatly pleased with her. Throup says she is going to be better than Tulip. Lovely front and great liberty.

I forgot to say that last time I was here this happened. Albert put in a beautiful mare, which came over backwards. As she was lying on the floor all fast in her harness with the stable-lads hopping around and Albert unbuckling her and wondering if she had broken her back, which would mean the best part of a thousand pounds gone west—while all this was going on a parson cycled up to us, dismounted, took no notice of the mare struggling on the ground, removed his straw hat, and said to Albert in the accents of the Rev. Robert Spalding: "*Excuse me, may I sketch your barn?*"

Sept. 3. Returned via Stratford. Hideous place on a Sunday.

What needs my Shakespeare for his honoured bones? Certainly not a theatre looking like a barracks-cum-roadhouse. Paid a shilling to go in. Apron stage, which for me is fatal. I get *no* illusion unless the actors are railed-off. I also prefer footlights. Is this the result of fifty years of the picture stage? All I know is that the absence of a rail—gold, with massive rings like slave-bangles from which hang short curtains of red plush—and "arty" lighting coming from behind me merely stress the fact that I am watching highbrows play-acting. In a *proper* theatre I still have the illusion that I am actually looking at Shakespeare's Macbeth and not some actor's presentation of him.

Took my brother Edward to Bertorelli's in the Queen's Road, and dined at same table with Sydney Brooks, whom I have always very much liked. One of the few remaining English gentlemen, slightly Galsworthian without being priggish.

Sept. 4. *The Post Victorians* has now come out. My "Marie Lloyd" contribution a bit perfunctory, in fact *very*. Am much moved by Harold Child's essay on Walkley which ends:

He may not in the future be read, perhaps, as much as he deserves, because the very short essay, the form in which

he excelled, does not "collect" well ; and he was too sound a critic of his own work to magnoperate, to try the *longue haleine*. Historians of the drama and of literature, therefore, may not do him justice in time to come. He would not greatly care. He deliberately wrote for the present, not for the future. Enough for him if to the more or less ideal consumers his work had given pleasure.

As far as I am concerned it is untrue that Walkley doesn't collect. I have the three *Pastiche and Prejudice* volumes—a present from Jock—and am always dipping into them. But they never sold, and this is one more of my charges against the highbrow crowd, which objects to *my* work and then refuses to support the better stuff.

Drove to Creeksea Ferry in the evening. This is a mud-flat with a rickety pub. and four bungalows. You drive up to a sea-wall, mount six rotting wooden stairs, and there before you is a little arm of the sea with a hundred tiny boats. Very ugly, I've no doubt, in the daytime ; but lovely under the moon of a breathless night, with the lights of the Yacht Club at Burnham-on-Crouch blazing ten miles away and the music from Burnham Fair coming across the water. Played bagatelle in the pub. and a good supper of bacon and eggs and beer.

Sept. 5. Dined with Sydney Carroll, who is quite cross because I will not touch his open-air Shakespeare. He told me that a woman producer is the best for temperamental actresses. Heard at rehearsal recently :

TEMPERAMENTAL ACTRESS (*with winning smile*). I don't feel I'm *quite* right here.

WOMAN PRODUCER (*promptly*). You're bloody, darling !

Sydney told me he had trebled Tony Baerlein's salary, which makes it £3. He has made money out of the Regent's Park affair.

Sept. 7. Extract from Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkin's presidential address to the "British Ass", as reported in to-day's *Times* :

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I LIE ON IT

Lord Russell once ventured on the statement that in passing from physics to biology one is conscious of a transition from the cosmic to the parochial, because from a cosmic point of view life is a very unimportant affair.

But that is no reason why I should not spend most of the morning worrying at my *Sunday Times* article, in fact re-writing it about five times until Jock jibs.

Letter from Marie Tempest who is touring the wilds without her Willie !

*Royal Station Hotel,  
Newcastle-on-Tyne.*

DEAREST JIMMIE,

How are you, dear, after your holiday ?

Willie tells me that you were not feeling too well. It only shows that one should never take a holiday ! Personally, I have forgotten the meaning of the word.

I cannot begin to tell you of the savagery of these places. I try everything, go down hundreds of dreadful steps into Mortimer's Hole at Nottingham, visit the Castle, go down into dungeons, lunch with Councillors and their dull wives, motor out to pools to bathe in unspeakably dirty sea-water, motor for miles—in fact everything. And nothing makes any difference. When your heart is aching so much that I want to burst into tears at any moment. Dull, but, thank God, not too unprofitable.

I hope I'm not boring you too much, but I wanted you to know that I am thinking of you, and hoping that the malaise has passed.

*Votre amie qui vous aime.*

MARY.

My darling hasn't been separated from Willie for something like twenty years. Shall reply that she shouldn't attempt it as she and Willie are as inseparable as Walrus and Carpenter. Shall not indicate which is which. Must cheer her up somehow.

Upon my asking for permission to re-print Mary's letter, Willie wrote :

EGO

55 Avenue Road,  
Regent's Park, N.W.8.  
6th Sept., '34.

MY DEAR JIMMIE,

As regards Mary's poor little effort you might get her "persons" right. As it reads she seems to be concerned about your heart to the point of being on the verge of tears. If you don't understand syntax you have a Scotsman there who can explain what I mean. I expect he will also take out the full stop and substitute a comma, or, flying rather high, a semi-colon. But keep an eye on his shalls and wills. However, as dear old St. Beuve says: "*Déterminer ce qu'un auteur a voulu faire, et comment il l'a fait, ce doit être le premier souci du critique.*"

Love from both,

WILLIE.

I have, of course, printed Mary's letter exactly as she wrote it.

Sept. 8. Extract from to-day's leading article in *The Times* on the death of Lord Grey:

A great Foreign Secretary, it has been argued, might have taken in time some decisive line that would have forestalled the later appeal to arms. Grey has had critics from two sides who hold that either British detachment or a more truculent resistance—at least a plain statement of British intentions—would have led to other results. To judge from events as they happened neither argument is likely to be true, and, true or not, neither course would have been in keeping with the temper of British policy at all times or with the public opinion on which it ultimately depends. How could British intentions have been more expressly defined without being anxiously accused at home either of feebleness or of warlike bias?

In other words, Grey is excused for not averting or postponing the war because to take a strong line would (a) not have been good form for an English statesman and (b) have exposed him to misinterpretation by his own countrymen. But what is "greatness" in a statesman except to know when to discard

good form, and at all times to ignore what fools may think or say?

Sept. 9. My birthday. Expected to be morbid but wasn't.

Was excruciatingly bored by *Ball at the Savoy*, the new musical piece at Drury Lane. The title led me to hope for something *à la* Strauss; instead it was the dreariest stuff. Went to the Savage Club afterwards and bit my pen for half an hour before producing anything at all readable.

Sept. 10. Burnham-on-Crouch and sat on a form till dark reading *The Tribulations of a Baronet*, being an account by

his son of the Sir William Eden of the Whistler controversy, in which it now seems that the Baronet was right and the Butterfly worse than wrong. Am struck with Eden's likeness to me. Add a dash of old Mitford, a hint of John Dickens, plus a bit of Skimpole with a seasoning of Boythorn, and there you are!

Sept. 13. Longest drought for thirty-odd years ended to-day, and appropriately enough Sydney Carroll produced

*The Tempest* in the open air at Regent's Park. According to *The Times* the proceedings opened with Phyllis Neilson-Terry singing three songs not connected with the play. Morgan's lieutenant, whose name I always forget, snubs Drinkwater by calling his Prospero "lady-like".

Sept. 14. I think I must be going mad *à la* Maupassant. All

the time I was dressing this morning I found that I had been saying aloud, "Well, what height is he?" For some time I could not collect myself sufficiently to know who the "he" was whose height bothered me so. Then, all of a sudden, I remembered. I was thinking of that paragraph I had read in this morning's paper:

The greatest little horse that ever trod a race-course won the St. Leger yesterday—Hyperion! Such a tiny fellow has never won the St. Leger before. Ormonde, it is certain, was the finest racehorse in history, but Hyperion, it is equally certain, is the finest little horse.



This is the sort of thing which so exasperates me. *Why not say what height the horse is?*

Must really take to dressing again for first nights. But it's a bore. After *Nice Goings-On* took George to Rules, which is getting "amusing". Supping were John van Druten, Auriol Lee, Komisarjevsky, Peggy Ashcroft, Nelson Keys, Maurice Evans and an actress whose name I always forget but who plays frumps in Sunday evening shows. Bishop knows all these people and talks to them. Van Druten, who looked very smart in a white tie, sprung the new theory that part of the business of the playwright is to mirror the novel. Auriol said, "Hush, darling!"

The weather has taken up again, and all day long Southend is bathed in yellow serenity, an almost Tennysonian quality of sunlight.

Am saying of Leslie Henson that he looks like amorous gold-fish, blushing acolyte, Peeping Tom and sleeping Faun all at the same time. I like to do Leslie well, though I can never come up to my description of him years ago as "looking like a moth whose eyeballs were about to burst through eating too much tapestry".

Sept. 15. Plays and ponies. The waning interest is, I suppose, balanced by the increasing passion. I have got to the stage when all plays are alike in this, they are all too long and they all send me to sleep. I have lost delight in what might be called the common form of the theatre. I mean by this that I should like managers to pick out of each play that bit in which it differs from all the other plays, and then get me to the theatre to see it acted. This would take about twenty minutes. But the ponies are different. My age does not wither their infinite variety.

Sept. 16. Terribly bored by Maugham's new play *Sheppey*, at Wyndham's. Bored not only because it was common but because it all seemed so hopelessly beside the point. Maugham was out to prove that "a man who tried to live like Jesus Christ to-day would be certified as mad and put into a lunatic asylum". That statement seems to me to

be so foolish as to be almost meaningless. The man who to-day tried to live like Nero or Peter the Great, would also be certified and put into an asylum. What Maugham ought to have meant is that that man would be regarded as insane *whose life differed from the normal life of to-day as that of Jesus differed from the normal life of eighteen hundred years ago.* The effect produced on the crowd when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass was widely different from that which would be produced on a London, Paris or Berlin crowd to-day. Everything that Jesus did and said must be taken with not a grain but a whole sheaf of historical perspective. Jesus spoke in parables, advisedly and not for a whim, and the point about a parable is that it must be interpreted in the same spirit. I cannot believe that any priest of any church can have asked anybody at any time in the last eighteen hundred years to believe that Christ intended to be taken literally when He said : "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Or when He promised that faith will remove mountains. We must all agree that these passages are to be interpreted spiritually. Then why make exceptions? Why say we must interpret this passage spiritually and another literally? Jesus, we may argue, was very definite in His advice to the young man who had great possessions. But are we justified in assuming that Christ did not know the danger of arguing from the particular to the general, and was unaware of what must economically happen if all rich men decide to sell their possessions at the same time? Now about the rich young man. We note, or ought to if we are reading carefully, that the advice that Jesus gave him was of the canniest. Jesus prefaced His advice with the words : "If thou wilt be perfect." Now let it be supposed that the rich young man putting this question to Jesus had hoped to entangle Him as the Pharisees intended when they asked if it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar. Remembering Christ's answer to this, is it not feasible to suppose that He would have told the young man not to aspire after more perfection than is compatible with the normal duties of citizenship? Indeed, can we be quite sure that if the young man had gone gleefully away and divested himself of his possessions he would not have

incurred a sharp rebuke for spiritual arrogance? Bringing this down to our own day, are we quite sure that the rich man who in his will leaves to charities something that his widow and children have been led to expect as their rightful inheritance is acting in accordance with Christian precept? What right have we to be satisfied that Christ was without worldly wisdom? I believe that the text "Render unto Cæsar" is capable of being read as "Render unto society that which is properly society's", and I find nothing in the life of Christ which suggests that living to-day He would not have paid the corresponding respect to the social order's greater complications. To suggest that a man who tried to live like Jesus Christ would be put into an asylum seems to me to argue a singular ignorance of the real nature of Christ's life and teaching.

I had a terrible tussle with my *S.T.* article about this play and was at it from 11 in the morning till 10 at night. Poor faithful Jock, who sat screwed up in a corner of the sofa glowering at my sterility and every quarter of an hour alternately putting down or crossing out some constipated sentence! On these occasions I write in nodules, in the way a rabbit stools, or whatever is the polite word. I gather I am the only critic who disapproves of M.'s play.

*Sept. 17.* Too done-up last night to do anything except pub-crawl with Ernest Fenton and Leo. With his usual superb common-sense Ernest asked why Sheppey should give his money to *successful* harlots. "Why not to women too old or too ugly for the streets?"

People who don't read the cheap Sunday papers miss lots of fun. A young woman, aged 25, was kidnapped in Kansas City some weeks ago. £6,000 ransom was paid, and the girl came home cherishing a rose out of a bouquet the leader of the gang had given her! The leader was presently arrested and sentenced to death—in order to discourage this industry. Failing a reprieve he is to be hanged in a week or two, and in the meantime the girl has lost her heart to him and visits the death-cell daily. And yet we jibe at the pictures! Stayed the night at E.'s and told him this story. E. promptly asked

whether I thought any of the three English officers released by Chinese bandits last week would emerge from captivity treasuring a rose.

Lunched at Café Royal with Cedric Hardwicke, who has a theory that when Shaw is dead and actors can cut as they like Shaw will turn out to be great theatre ! George Bishop's wife told me she thought of re-writing the plays as Shaw would have written them if he had been a meat-eater and a wine-bibber. "Like duplicate bridge," this delightful creature explained. Hardwicke also explained how in *Yellow Sands* he made all the lines of his body, including his coat-collar and moustache, droop, whereas in *Show Boat* they all turned up and in *The Barretts* they were rectangular, including his walk across the stage which was either parallel to the footlights or at right angles to them.

CEDRIC. My theory of acting is that it is so minor an art that the only self-respect attaching to it is to be able to reproduce one's performance with mathematical accuracy.

J. A. Quite ! A professional is a man who can do his job when he doesn't feel like it ; an amateur is one who can't when he does feel like it.

CEDRIC. It shouldn't make a hair's breadth of difference to an actor if he has a dead baby at home and a wife dying.

J. A. But if one is dying oneself, or has the toothache ?

CEDRIC (*smiling*). Have a cigar !

We then discussed what was wrong with Maugham's *Sheppey*. I said that an author who gets into a pet when Christ's commandments are not kept can only make the pet convincing if we feel that the whole body of his work is an argument for Christ. Cedric asked if I meant that it was Shaw's subject and not Maugham's, and I replied : "Of course !"

Took Leo to supper at the Trocadero and was very glad when he only wanted to drink beer. This enabled me to have my usual pint of champagne. I am dead without it. But I cannot afford to buy champagne for other people. If, therefore, I invite anybody to a meal—which owing to the imppecuniosity of all my friends I must always do—either I must behave like a cad or remain dead. I prefer the former. Leo

said that to get the best out of a love-affair one should never ask for more passion than the beloved one is competent to provide. It is impossible to convey the amount of erotic disillusion in Leo's voice as he said this. Wordsworth would have called it disappointment recollected in tranquility. Apropos of Gibbon, Macaulay and Carlyle, Leo defined History as "the way things get about".

Sept. 18. Spent the morning in bed, reviewing. Rather pleased at finding myself alluded to by my surname only in Rachel Ferguson's *A Child in the Theatre*: "The kind of actress Agate would call husky and orchidaceous." The book has a delightful story of a provincial pantomime which broke up because the Boy Babe was found to be in the family way.

Leo told Ernest about our supper last night, adding, that it reminded him of the famous line in *Little Eyolf*: "There stood the champagne but *I* tasted it not!"

Sept. 19. Motored to Wylde Green and next day to Altrincham. Excellent show, but enjoyment largely spoiled by hideous loud-speaker incessantly blaring popular songs, hymns, and back-chat comedians. Most nerve-racking. While watching exciting pony-class, Mancunian high-brow claimed acquaintanceship of twenty years ago and asked what I thought of Maugham's *Sheppey*!

After show motored Frank Wainwright with Albert Throup and Geoffrey Bennett to Wainwright's farm at Talke, where was bred my first great pony, Talke Princess, dam of Axholme Venus, sold for 2,500 guineas. Walked over the farm and saw some twenty animals among which I picked out an exquisite filly foal and a pretty good yearling filly, both ponies. Bought them, and sold Champagne who, I hope, will get some good mares.

Sept. 22. Another long struggle, this time with Bridie's *A Sleeping Clergyman*. The difficulty with both this play and Maugham's is that I have to tidy up their arguments for them before I can write a neat article myself. Bridie, for



*Harry Jevory in Coomee Golf Links*



example, thinks that *habits* are hereditary, which means that I have to put his theories right before I can say where his play goes wrong. The labour of clarifying in short space other people's muddle-headedness is enormous. None of my colleagues seems to bother about this.

Gave Dick Shanks and George Bishop lunch at the Ivy. Dick is getting keener-minded than ever, which is in odd contrast with his cherubism. I rather forgot myself and told George that he was getting into the gossip-writer's bad habit of liking all plays irrespective of their quality and intellectual content.

In *The Times* this morning the following appeared :

#### PÉLISSIER AND HIS FOLLIES

*To the Editor of "The Times"*

SIR,—In his admirable article on Pélissier Mr. Mackail says that the Follies "might as often as not be found in the little theatre that used to be part of the Midland Hotel, Manchester". I was present at the first performance ever given by the Follies at that little theatre. The audience knew nothing of what was in store for them, the only hint of the nature of the entertainment being provided by an illustration on the programme. This showed one of the statelier homes of England, and underneath was written : "House in which Mr. Pélissier Was Not Born."

The following year the late C. E. Montague paid one of his rare visits to London. The theatrical season was in full swing. The Lyceum, St. James's, and Court Theatres were magnoperating, and in the way of foreign visitors Réjane was displaying the essence of Parisian *chic*, Bernhardt was perforating Byzantine tyrants with a hat-pin, while Duse now very much *à la mode* nobly cavorted.

It was calculated in the office of the "Manchester Guardian" that our leader during his short absence could have attended two evening performances and a *matinée*. Asked what plays he had seen Montague replied : "I went to the Follies—twice !"

Yours, &c.,  
JAMES AGATE.

*Savage Club, W.C.2.*  
*Sept. 24.*



Sept. 27. Motored to Frome Show via Basingstoke. Nobody at Stonehenge, and on this moist grey day was struck by its smallness. Charming country show, and came back through Devizes and Marlborough. Car behaved badly, or should have indulged in war-time nostalgia.

Supper at Café Royal with A. P. Herbert, his wife, and Peacock, Golding Bright's partner, a fanatical Proustian who was extremely interested in the identity of Albertine and in how, at Albert's hotel, I once saw the coat-tails of the master followed by a boy carrying a cage of white mice and some hat-pins.

They asked me who I thought was the best actress in England and, to annoy them, I said "Beatrix Lehmann"—who very nearly is. They wanted me to say "Flora Robson" and I was just in that mood when I wouldn't. Peacock told me that he had paid away to Rudolf Besier the best part of £100,000 in connection with *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*.

Sept. 30. An idle day. Walking in Piccadilly met a superb creature, six-foot tall or so, with eyes now sweeping the heavens and now raking the footpath for contumacious opposition. It was Edith Evans, and her high, Meredithian patricianhood struck me as intentional counterbalance to any notion of humility accruing through her part of the housemaid in *Christopher Bean*.

A little incident typical of the soldier-spirit. We had broken down and Wright was tinkering at the engine. A wounded ex-soldier—he had no legs—passed us on his hand-propelled tricycle. As he went by he said with a broad grin: "Want a tow, mate?"

Oct. 1. Correspondence about *A Sleeping Clergyman*.

6 Woodlands Terrace,  
Glasgow, C.3.  
Sunday.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

Really! I mean to say you can't have been listening. The coldness of your critic in the little dialogue is nothing compared to my chilly experience when I find quoted against me as a knock-down argument a thesis advanced (I believe

more eloquently) by one of my own characters—I refer to the piano-playing Cameron girl.

Nor am I less astonished when you advance as evidence of mental untidiness the fact that the stage is held throughout by “Harriet’s father”, Dr. Marshall. The play is about him and his faith in the peculiar qualities I, “perhaps subconsciously”, attribute to the whole Cameron-Hannah-Marshall-Walker gang. If I haven’t made that clear, I don’t know how to make it any clearer.

I am writing this letter not to argue with you—I obviously can’t begin to do that when your whole attack is based on a misapprehension of what I have actually said. I am writing to tell you that you are using your enormous influence, “perhaps subconsciously”, to set all the minor dramatic critics barking up the wrong trees. You did the same thing last week in your discussion of an enormously more distinguished dramatist.

What you call a theme—I take it a general philosophic idea as a background to the action—seems to be an *almost* essential part of a modern play. But don’t you think that to concentrate upon it to the exclusion of everything else is a horrid fault in a dramatic critic? You put me entirely wrong about *Sheppey*. Surely Mr. Maugham’s opinion about Jesus, however interesting, is of less importance than his achievement as an artist; and surely it is less your affair to quarrel with his opinions than to expound his method and effects. You could have helped me and my audiences and my actors by bringing your knowledge to bear on my composition as a composition and not as a tract. I was terribly disappointed to find yards of discussion on a philosophy I do not hold and a standpoint you have misunderstood.

If you charge me with obscurity, I accuse you of inattention. I *do* make it quite clear that (1) Marshall is Harriet’s brother, not her father; (2) Wilhelmina does not deceive her fiancé with Hannah but, so far as there is any deception at all, deceives Hannah with her fiancé; (3) Hannah is not a ghillie; (4) Hannah’s strength of will as an element in the mixture is explicitly stated; (5) neither of the Camerons is a chemist; (6) there is a phthisical bequest—this is stated by Dr. Coutts in the second club scene.

I hope this isn’t an ungracious reception of a very kindly-

spirited notice ; but what else can I do ? I am your sincere admirer and I am anxious to learn from you, but in the last two weeks you have let me down badly with two ill-conceived accounts of two quite interesting plays. When the leading critic in London does things like that, what is an anxious and struggling sort of a tyro to think ?

Sincerely yours,

JAMES BRIDIE.

107 *Chalkwell Avenue,*  
*Westcliff-on-Sea,*

2nd October, 1933.

DEAR MR. BRIDIE,

I am concerned first of all to answer your charges of specific inaccuracy.

(1) Harriet's father. This was a pure slip of the pen for which I apologise.

(3) I always use "ghillie" as shorthand for the kind of Scotch youth who when he is not reading Plato in the original is clearing away a picnic or washing up bottles in his master's surgery. Probably *Mary Rose* is answerable for this, and as you have Thesiger in your piece the associative link is complete. But I again apologise and will, when I come to reprint my essay, use any word you prefer.

(5) In the matter of "chemist" I think, dear Mr. James MacBridie, you must permit an Englishman to use his own language in his own way. If a young man hunting for bugs with test-tubes and a middle-aged man ladling out serum from whatever they keep serum in is not a chemist in the sense that Bacon was a chemist when he stuffed a fowl with snow to see how long it would keep from putrefying—why, then I will take lessons in ma mither tongue in any Scotch night-school you care to recommend !

As for the points numbered (2), (4), and (6), I just can't be bothered with them.

Now about what you were driving at ! Isn't your theory this, that the drunken scallywag who in 1860 fiddles away in his garret at Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto must be allowed to beget any number of syphilitic children because in 1933 his grandson will be drawing all London to the Albert Hall to hear the Elgar Violin Concerto ? In other

words, must we not rid the world of syphilis because it may cost us a few fiddlers?

Your play seems to me to be weak on the argumentative side because you lay the maximum stress on the fiddling, which is not hereditary, and the minimum stress on the syphilis which is. If your play is not about this, then what is it about?

On the larger matter that to concentrate upon a play's idea to the exclusion of everything else "is a horrid fault in a dramatic critic"—surely it depends upon the idea and the playwright? In *Sheppey* Maugham took as his theme a highly controversial saying of Jesus which if interpreted literally would alter the world more than the Soviet has altered Russia. For his theme Maugham uses three acts, the first of which is thrown away in joking over the lather-pots in a barber's saloon, while the third is wasted in a totally irrelevant death-scene. This as craftsmanship and in a man of Maugham's talent is contemptible, and I am not going to waste time on that craftsmanship. This talk of "helping the author" is all nonsense. Maugham knows that he has written a slack and slick play, and whatever I may say about this one will not affect him when he sits down to write his next.

If it is not worth a critic's while to correct a man who can do better, how is it worth his while to correct a man who does not think that better can be done? It would be useless to quarrel with you because of the way the last act of *The Anatomist* frittered away all the play's interest. The last act of your present play does exactly the same thing, for half-past ten is too late to embark upon a Plague of London, which is cumbersome, and a hospital scene, which is a bore.

Your mind obviously runs to plays which peter out and to complain of this would be as useless as to congratulate you on the fact that they begin well instead of petering in! But then, my dear Bridie, I have never believed that dramatic criticism was ever any practical use to anybody. The mischief is done before it gets to the critic, and no dramatist who is worth his salt can be taught anything.

Now take the prussic-acid incident. This is so frankly preposterous that somebody else can have a go at it. To me this could only be the clearest hint that you didn't care a fig for your play as a play but only as a vehicle for your ideas.

So we get back to where we started. The difference

between us is that whereas we both believe in heredity I think it has to do with snub noses and you think it has to do with acute faculties.

May I now make a point which I think may have some value? The point is that the more complicated the dramatist's theme the simpler must be his dramatic exposition. You will agree with the converse, that one of the merits of the complicated machinery of a dramatist like Sardou is that in the mere following of the plot the mind is prevented from perceiving that there is no idea. The mind of the spectator is like a vessel in that it can only contain so much. Having a great deal of essential stuff to get into that vessel, it behoves the dramatist to be sparing with the inessentials.

In your case, you take the enormous theme of heredity, eugenics, and sterilisation. The first thing you do is to pour into the pot of my mind that red herring which is the sleeping clergyman who has nothing to do with the play! Then why drag in the little lady with the many petticoats? Why see it all through the eyes of a maundering father—I mean brother? The point, my dear Bridie, is that when the mind is wrestling with a big thing like heredity it is liable *at a first hearing* to mistake Admiral Sir Joseph Porter's sisters for his cousins and his aunts.

You will note that I have underlined the words "at a first hearing". This because it is only the very great dramatist who is entitled to ask us to give his play a second hearing. And the very great dramatist will write such a very great play that it won't need a second hearing, though we may want to go to it again and again, as we do to Ibsen's *Ghosts*, for fun!

Has it occurred to you that Ibsen manages his great play of heredity with less than half a dozen characters and without any nonsense about genealogical trees? But I think I must break off this letter, or I shall be arriving at the brutal statement that the Really Big Themes should be left to the Really Big Men.

Yours sincerely,

JAMES AGATE.

Oct. 3. Played golf at Wimbledon Park with Morris Harvey.

Met Pat Hoffe in the Club-house and sat for some time swopping Irving and Tree stories. Most of them were old, though this, I think, has never been told. When Morris

was a very young man he played Sir Toby Belch in an amateur performance of *Twelfth Night*, got up by Mrs. Aria for the benefit of her daughter who played Viola. Mrs. Aria insisted upon the presence of the great man who for three hours—they played the piece without a break—was penned up in a corner next to the piano. When the curtain fell somebody asked Irving how he liked it. He said, "Capital! Capital! Where's the lavatory?"

Among the other stories we recalled was one of a rehearsal of *Romeo and Juliet*. It was the quarrel scene and the young actors, being anxious to show their mettle before the great man, let off a lot of energy and made a terrific hubbub with the clashing of rapiers and their cries of "Have at thee!" Irving looked on for some time and then stopped the rehearsal to say: "Very good, gentlemen. *But don't fidget.*"

Oct. 4. A golden day at Westcliff, which I spent in gumming!

Jock had the day off in celebration of the fact that on Sunday he completed seven years' service with me. He is at once my staff, prop or stay and, when he likes, my thorn in the flesh. *All but* indispensable. Much virtue in "all but", and I keep myself screwed up to the pitch of being able to dispense with him if necessary.

#### RHYME FOR AN ACTRESS

B stands for Beryl,  
Upstage and no kitten,  
In the matter of husbands  
Once shy and twice bitten!

Listened in to the D minor Brahms Concerto, played by Solomon. Enjoyed it very much in spite of passing railway trains and motors changing gear uphill, and until in the middle of the last movement the batteries ran out. This was my first acquaintance with the work. Which only shows how shockingly uneducated I am. Only last week I visited the Tate Gallery for the first time!!!! The best picture, in my view, was Millais's "Christ in the House of His Parents", not because of the subject but because I was brought up on Holman Hunt's "The Hireling Shepherd" and Madox Brown's "Work" in the Manchester Art Gallery. Also Millais's

"Autumn Leaves", though I loathe the anecdotal stuff. (By the way, is "The Hireling Shepherd" Hunt or Brown?) The picture I liked next best was Degas's "Sur la Plage", and there was a charming Utrillo. There was a typical James Pryde, about somebody being buried in a grave dug in the floor of a bedroom and at the foot of a four-poster with a tester forty feet high. The Whistlers seemed to me to be becoming merely pretty. The trousers on Chatterton as he lies dead are a lovely blue, and Landseer's "The Bay Mare" is shoved away in a corner. But all this is no reason why my new house-parlourman should always arrange to let the batteries on the wireless run down whenever I am here! To make up for this he arranges flowers better than Fantin Latour could paint them. His name is Caddick, he comes from Cannock, and is a rattling good nurse. When I am nervy he doesn't rattle me. Was with the *Sign of the Cross* on tour for some years and played Romans and Christians impartially. I asked him if it was a No. 4 company and he said it would have been if there had been three others.

Oct. 5. Long letter from Bridie.

6 Woodlands Terrace,  
Glasgow, C.3.

4th October, 1933.

MY DEAR AGATE (if I may make so bold),

It was a pleasure to get your letter. It was good of you to write at all, for you are obviously sick of writing about plays.

If it will entertain you—and, indeed, whether or no—I'll tell you what I was driving at.

If an idea can be boiled down to a few words, what's the use of writing a play about it? But the theme of the S.C. can be roughly stated thus:

The tragedy of one generation can be the glory of three or four.

Now, if you like, I shall write a play beginning with a perfect love scene and ending with a grandson getting G.P.I. This would illustrate the converse and any reasonable man would be prepared to support either thesis. The S.C. thesis is the better one because either the syphilis or the generation is liable to die out in 70 years.

A corollary to my proposition was this :

It is necessary to know a good deal more than we do about biology before we begin to strike at its roots.

I began to write a story with these ideas at the back of my mind. Enough of them survived the story-telling process to be intelligible to Mr. Morgan (forgive me) and a multitude of other intelligent people.

Please note that I was trying to write a story in dialogue and not a treatise on eugenics. I wasn't trying to prove anything. A play can't prove anything. Even *Ghosts* doesn't prove anything. It creates a prejudice against certain lines of conduct and certain codes of morals, but its chief merit is that it is a good story. As an exposition of clinical facts, even, it is quite negligible. I'm not arguing, I'm telling you. I know something about syphilis and about heredity as a professional and you are only a damned amateur.

In parenthesis, I could see the boots off you on snub noses and such like ; but when I am telling stories about things of the spirit, I wish you wouldn't sidetrack my audiences into manuals of popular science.

Well. My theory is not that the Mendelssohn syphilitic (my God ! what a silly parallel) " must be allowed " to do this or that, but that, in the absence of any feasible method of stopping him (apart entirely from the rights and wrongs of the case), some unknown quantity to which a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past may put matters right without our help.

There is warrant for believing in this possibility.

I am really interested in the rest of your letter, because it contains the dramatic criticism I was fortunate enough to escape in your *Sunday Times* article. May I defend myself on one or two points ?

The genealogical tree was meant for a joke and, if I am to allow you to use Humpty-Dumptyisms in what, after all, is my native language too, please be generous to my Scottish ideas of what is funny.

It is true, of course, that most of my last acts are bad ; but they are bad with good intention and may become good in time. The tidy last act with its thread-collecting and its full close maddens me and I am trying to find a new formula without deserting the old shape.



The Anatomist was a cross-section of Edinburgh society in 1831. It introduced a comic scientific hooligan whom you (bless your heart) chose to regard as a Pasteur. You therefore instructed me to write a play I'd sooner die than write about the tragedy of the unappreciated genius. If you hadn't been at your old games again you would have seen that it was only dexterity that was lacking. The scenario was clear and correct for the type of composition I was after.

The pandemic in *A Sleeping Clergyman* is stagey and unsatisfactory. But I couldn't invent any other method for Cameron to save the world and please old Marshall. It does get home to the ninety per cent of the audience who are afraid of sickness.

The petticoat lady gives an angle on the theme and takes the play out of the shambles for a few minutes. I am not a sadist.

I am sorry you think the poison scene so bad. I took no end of trouble over it and was rather cocky about it. I still like it, but I'm probably wrong.

As for the maundering brother, I think his point of view highly reasonable and quite suitable for a modern audience to make its own.

In any event, is heredity a much bigger subject, say, than murder? I have tackled an aspect of it through the eyes of a very ordinary decent body whose trade deals directly with hereditary material. I couldn't have done it with less presumption or pretentiousness. And you kick me in the stomach, Nazi fashion, because I am not Ibsen.

I also must break off this letter or I shall be arriving at the insolent statement that I consider you an amusing writer but a rotten dramatic critic. That you are shallow, prejudiced, arrogant and doctrinaire. That your avowed intention of re-publishing in a book that deplorable rubbish you wrote about *A Sleeping Clergyman* is evidence that poor playwrights are not the only people with a blind spot to their own incompetencies.

And that would be dreadful.

I therefore remain,

*Sans rancune* (I hope)

Yours very sincerely,

JAMES BRIDIE.

I find that I haven't explained the title of the play. You don't mind, do you?

J. B.

1933]

I LIE ON IT

107 Chalkwell Avenue,  
Westcliff-on-Sea,  
5th October, 1933.

MY DEAR BRIDIE,

First let me thank you for your good-tempered letter. But is it true that "a play cannot prove anything"? Does not *Ghosts* prove that there are some wives who should leave some husbands? And is not *Macbeth* sufficient proof that for a nervous bloke to commit murder is N.B.G.?

You say I instructed you to write a play about a tragedy of the unappreciated genius. This is inaccurate. What I wrote was: "This conflict did not lie essentially in Knox's inability to win his Amelia, which might happen to any old bachelor, but in his futile strugglings against Nemesis." You could have made your play into a comedy of abortion or whatever Knox lived by in his final years in London. What I objected to was having my interest aroused in the story and then not satisfied. What would you say if Shakespeare had ended his play with Hamlet in England because he objected to "a tidy last act with its thread-collecting and its maddening full close"? As a playgoer I am not concerned with what it amuses you to write but with what it amuses me to see.

The whole point between us is that you believe it to be a dramatic critic's business to teach a playwright his job and I don't. Oddly enough as I was looking up Walkley for something else, I found a passage which I will now copy out for you. This was last night, but I waited to send it because I felt a letter from you was on the way. This is the passage, which seems to me to put the difference between us in a nutshell.

"Ideas, you see, are a godsend to the critic; they are the very articles he deals in, and when he gets them in the theatre he plays with them and picks them to pieces to see what is inside, like the child with a new toy. Give him a thesis, and you have given him his article! He can not only examine the playwright's solution, but suggest another one of his own, and in fact pass in review all the possible permutations and combinations of the problem presented. The result is apt to be a little deceptive about the play itself, because it suits the critic to travel farther afield in the region

of ideas than the playwright. Nor is it merely a question of intellectual area covered ; the need for logical symmetry, for strict form, in analysis will often have tempted the critic to assume these qualities in the play when they are not, in fact, there. His picture of what the playwright has constructed will be, in Joe Gargery's phrase, a little too ' architectooralooral '. Hence the playgoer is often disappointed when he goes to see the play for himself. Half the ideas he has read about are not there, and those that are there are not so shipshape. I doubt, for instance, if there is so much in *Hamlet*, the actual play, seen within the four walls of the theatre, as the vast ' Hamlet literature ' which has grown out of it would have us believe. I can imagine Shakespeare with a twinkle in his eye asking us, " Do you really see all that in it ? " I can think of only two dramatists who have always been able to have as many ideas about their plays as the critics—and a few over. They are Dumas  *fils*  and Mr. Shaw, both of whom have written prefaces of vaster reach than the plays they precede. When you get ' inside ', what you actually see, though quite worth seeing, hardly comes up to the poster."

I am afraid as a critic I belong to the ' architectooralooral ' school. In any case may I say in all friendliness that I have no intention of belonging to any other ?

Yours very sincerely,

JAMES AGATE.

P.S. Have just invented the aphorism : " Let the doors be shut upon the playwright, that he may play the experimenter nowhere but in's own house."

Bridie resolves our tiff with great charm :

6 Woodlands Terrace,

Glasgow, C.3.

7th October, 1933.

MY DEAR AGATE,

On the main issue you and the late Mr. Walkley win and I can only cry *Capivi*, bow to the closure and thank you for a short but exhilarating correspondence.

On the minor issue you are no doubt fully aware that all a playwright asks from a dramatic critic is complete under-

standing of his purpose, congratulations on the triumphant accomplishment of that purpose and a column or so of respectful and undiluted praise.

While you have fallen lamentably short of that high standard I am happy to have heaved a half brick or so at the Grand Cham of English Criticism and to have come off with nothing worse than a few bruises.

My regards to Your Wickedness and many thanks,

Sincerely yours,

JAMES BRIDIE.

P.S. But all the same, Macbeth is *not* sufficient proof that a nervous bloke shouldn't commit a murder. Hamlet, a much more neuropathic gent, should have done it in Act I and lived happy ever after. And I still think the last scene of *Hamlet* is a little ridiculous: though nothing could be tidier than that symmetrical arrangement of stiffs.

Oct. 14. Must now reconstruct the past ten days.

*Friday.* Received a p.c. from Philip Godlee with a quotation from the *Greek Anthology*. "Swift kindnesses are best; a long delay in kindness takes the kindness all away." This means that when I adjudicated at Wilmslow in the spring I took a picture off my charming host's wall and said I would have it re-framed. It has been re-framed for six months, but I have been too busy or too lazy to collect and despatch it.

*Saturday.* Fished around for, found and furbished up a lecture to give at Birmingham Repertory Theatre next day.

*Sunday.* Motored to Birmingham. Excellent lunch at the Hotel at Bicester, where even the bathroom taps and towels were clean. Delivered the lecture, which went very well. It was all facetious—but not silly—until the last ten minutes, when I gave an exposition of how to write a notice, taking *Cæsar and Cleopatra* as the play. This is rather fine and I pride myself on it. Lecturing is difficult because audiences are so damned odd. One woman got up and said she had thoroughly enjoyed the last ten minutes and wished there had been more like it. But consider another case. I had told

the audience about a performance of *Othello* at which at the words "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul" a woman next to me opened a large bag or small attaché case and began to make up her face out of a selection of small pots which she set out on the lid. At the end of the lecture a woman got up and justified this, saying that as her sex are more intuitive than men the woman had realised how the play must end! A successful lecturer has to cope with this fool as well as the intelligent woman who only liked seriousness.

*Monday.* Had a look at my foal. It is really lovely and Albert Throup who is normally pessimistic said that it was the best foal in England. Its conformation is perfect with the loveliest quality, and it is a tremendous goer.

Took Jock to Gow's to have oysters and a tankard of stout and champagne, the occasion being the Old Vic. production of *The Cherry Orchard* with a tremendous cast containing Charles Laughton, Leon Quartermaine, Roger Livesey, Flora Robson, Athene Seyler and Ursula Jeans. The last time we had a little gala of this sort was before a performance of *Hedda Gabler*. We only do it when it is a really great and exciting play. After the first act a silly woman rushed up to me and asked me what I thought of it. Why will women do this? It infuriates me, and this wretch, being a clever Jewess, should know better. The great point was how Athene would play Madame Ranevsky, alluded to in the text as a declining beauty. I thought she played it extremely well, giving the illusion of beauty. What a lovely actress and nice, clever creature! There was an immense crowd, and a young ass, half high-brow and half fashionable, was overheard to say in the foyer: "Why don't we come here oftener? It's no distance from the Savoy!"

*Tuesday.* First night of *Ballerina* at the Gaiety—the play which Rodney Ackland has made out of Lady Eleanor Smith's novel. Again as I was coming out a woman rushed up to me and asked what I thought of it, and had not the dialogue been flat? *Why will they do it?* Supper at Savoy. Violet Vanbrugh and Irene came up to me and said how good May

was in *The Constant Nymph*. "Such poise!" said Violet, and Irene said she could hardly believe it was the same actress who played the old Belgian woman in the *I Was a Spy* film at the Tivoli.

*Wednesday.* Spent nearly all day at the lawyer's making my will. Got away at 5 and went to see a picture at the Empire. Got to my doctor's at 7, got away from him at half-past, and in the Little Theatre at 8 for a cheerful play about a neurasthenic who was sent to a mental nursing home and turned into a lunatic. Arranged with Jock to bring a cold fowl and bottle of wine to Ernest's. I had had no food all day, and the arrangement was that we should gobble and swig these down, write twelve hundred words about the film for the *Tatler*, then motor back to Westcliff about 2 a.m. Carried out my part of the programme but no Jock, so ate a very worried supper all by myself. Much too tired to write the article by hand, so motored back to Westcliff relying on local typist to get me out of my difficulty early in the morning, which she did. Had an early telephone call from Jock saying he had fallen asleep at home, which I must and do believe because I know he has been suffering from insomnia. But whatever the cause the effect is the same on me, and I get into Lear-like rages which approximate to nerve-storms and from which I do not recover for one or two days.

*Thursday.* Jock arrived about 11 a.m. There was the usual row ending in the usual reconciliation brought about by a passage in *Le Misanthrope* :

Mais peut-être le mal n'est pas si grand qu'on pense.  
Et vous pourrez quitter ce désir de vengeance.  
Lorsque l'injure part d'un objet plein d'appas,  
On fait force desseins qu'on n'exécute pas :  
On a beau voir, pour rompre, une raison puissante,  
Une coupable aimée est bientôt innocente ;  
Tout le mal qu'on lui veut se dissipe aisément  
Et l'on sait ce que c'est qu'un courroux d'un amant.

I read this aloud, casting myself for Alceste and Jock for Éliante. In the evening reconciled further over a good bottle of claret and listened to a wireless concert consisting of the

Overture to the Meistersinger, a Haydn symphony, and an early Mozart violin concerto. We could almost *see* Beecham dragooning the orchestra in the Wagner, which never became ragged. Earlier in the evening and just about dusk with the lamps lit in the sitting-room, it was remarkable how the bungalows opposite took on the exact texture and colour of a picture by Utrillo. There is no English adjective to describe this; the French would use the word "blafard".

*Friday.* The hire-purchase people being rude because I had forgotten this month's instalment, I sent the Vauxhall back, I should think to their great annoyance. I still owed £130 on this car and it wanted another £40 spent on it immediately which make it £170. It just wasn't worth the money, so I sent it back and bought an old Morris Cowley in the town for £25 which will do perfectly well until the Spring.

The following letter which appeared in to-day's *Week-end Review* explains itself.

#### MR. AGATE EXPLAINS

SIR,

This letter is not an attempt to override or in any way question your award in Competition 183A for "the most impressive dirge in the form of a limerick". I write merely to dispose of an inference which in the absence of explanation might properly be drawn from your adjudicator's comment: "The cynical contribution of James Agate, who has misread the title of the competition, is, so to speak, *hors de combat*, and cannot claim even the Order of Chastity of the Second Class." This can only suggest that I was guilty of a bawdy composition at the expense of a dead soldier.

My explanation is simple. I was spending a few days in a simple part of the country to which the *Week-end Review* does not penetrate, and the news of this competition reached me in a letter, my friend merely saying that I might like to have a shot at composing "a dirge in the form of a limerick". He omitted the qualification that it was to be a dirge for a dead soldier. For more reasons than one I could wish he had not done so. The competition as set was a sitter. It only needed the combination of the

limerick sense with the most impressive words in the language, and within two minutes of reading the conditions for myself I found that I had written down :

O weep for a soldier called Ben,  
Who fought for Christ's Kingdom and then—  
There's no more to my story  
Save the Power and the Glory,  
For ever and ever. Amen.

If the charge of bad taste be preferred I shall submit that to play with limerick fire in connection with the death of a hero is to invite something transcending normal canons.

JAMES AGATE.

*Savage Club, W.C.2.*

My original limerick was as follows :

Lament we the desperate fix  
Of one who sold love *à prix fixe*,  
Sole fruit of her womb  
Is the worm i' the tomb  
And her hope of salvation is nix.

My notion was to write a limerick in the John Donne manner and I think this does it. If ever the *Week-end Review* should ask me to set another competition for them I shall ask for (a) a limerick in the John Donne manner and (b) an account in 200 words of a visit by Bunyan to the House Disorderly.

This is the place to say something about Gerald Barry, the brilliant editor of the *Week-end Review* which he brought into existence. I first knew Gerald when he came as a very young man to the *Saturday Review* as assistant to Filson Young. Physically he was the Scandinavian type with a lot of fair hair and a great sense of mischief. I remember him coming to one of the early dinners of the P.E.N. Club where, in a mingled mood of cocktails and high spirits, he sat down at a place reserved for a Swedish novelist calling himself Kurt Hamstrung or some such name. Busy ladies on either side plying him with queries, Gerald larded some very broken English with highly imaginative details concerning trolls, norns, and sagas. At length one of the ladies said: "Tell me, Herr Hamstrung, exactly how far is it from the Kattegat to the



Skagerrak ? ” Whereat Gerald, never at a loss for an answer, bethought him of Harry Tate whom the night before we had both seen at the Alhambra, and said, with a fearsome rolling of the eyes : “ Well, madam, one way it is, and another it isn’t ! ”

But Gerald could be serious enough when the occasion warranted. When Filson Young left the *Saturday Review*, Gerald became its editor, and for some years filled the position not only with dignity but with extraordinary ability. Filson began the rehabilitation of that review, but it was Gerald who finally brought it back to a level of excellence worthy of its greatest days.

Early in 1930 the proprietor demanded a *volte-face* in the paper’s policy. Gerald had written and published a leading-article unfavourable to the policy of Empire Free Trade, and the proprietor of the *Saturday* demanded that the leader of the following week should take the exactly contrary view. Accordingly, Gerald wrote a modified leader which went as far as his integrity would permit him. This did not satisfy the proprietor who had a leader written by another hand and insisted on its appearance. This was duly printed, Gerald insisting that a note should appear at the same time to the effect that he had resigned the editorship before the appearance of the article.

Here let me say that I am not concerned with whether editor or proprietor was sound in his economic opinions, and that the case would hold equally good if their opinions had been the other way round.

So Gerald walked out of the office of the *Saturday Review*, and with him also went its chief contributors, including Earle Welby, Gerald Gould, Ivor Brown, Dyneley Hussey, and Leslie Hartley. Gerald had no money at the time, and was the youngest editor who had ever occupied so important a chair. His hopes and ambitions were running high, and I think his action is one of the bravest that Fleet Street has ever known. It was immediately followed by an organizing feat to which the newspaper world can, I think, offer no parallel. Within six days Gerald collected enough support to start the *Week-end Review*, whose first number appeared exactly a

fortnight after his resignation from the editorship, of the *Saturday*.<sup>1</sup>

*Saturday*. Heinemann sent me this morning a copy of Maurice Baring's *Puppet Show of Memory*. I had asked Heinemann for this because it is in my mind that Maurice has written another essay on Sarah Bernhardt besides the one in *Punch and Judy*. I did not find what I was looking for but I did find this: M. B. had been staying at Belle-isle with Sarah who was carrying on a heated discussion by telegraph with the poet Catulle Mendès about a forthcoming production. After describing the length and beauty of the French poet's telegrams, M. B. says: "During the whole time I stayed there, Sarah never mentioned the theatre, acting, or actors, except as far as they concerned this particular business discus-

<sup>1</sup> The rest of the story is tragic. For three years the *Week-end Review* under Gerald's brilliant leadership was the best-written and the best-read weekly review in the country. Its contributors included Maurice Baring, Ivor Brown, G. K. Chesterton, John Galsworthy, Gerald Gould, J. B. S. Haldane, A. P. Herbert, Laurence Housman, Richard Hughes, Dyneley Hussey, Aldous Huxley, Julian Huxley, Sylvia Lynd, Rose Macaulay, Desmond MacCarthy, D. S. MacColl, Compton Mackenzie, Naomi Mitchison, J. B. Priestley, Naomi Royde-Smith, V. Sackville-West, Edward Shanks, R. C. Sherriff, Osbert Sitwell, J. C. Squire, James Stephens, H. M. Tomlinson, Hugh Walpole, Earle Welby, Humbert Wolfe, and D. B. Wyndham-Lewis.

It is well known that all literary reviews which have not the immemorial backing of the country parson and whose opinions are not so non-committal that they offend nobody, have a hard struggle for existence. The *Week-end Review* could not expect not to lose money during its first years, and the losses were diminishing. Nevertheless the proprietor felt that it was time for somebody else to hold the baby, failing which, publication must be discontinued. Once more Gerald did his utmost to obtain support, but this time it was not forthcoming. So the paper died, or rather was merged into the *New Statesman*, which so far as individuality is concerned comes to very much the same thing. There is no doubt that if Gerald had consented to bind himself and the paper to any particular shade of politics, support would have been found.

I write this having just attended the inaugural luncheon of a new film organisation which proposes to spend £120,000 on a couple of motion-pictures. I base my contempt for the highbrows on the plain fact that while they set their faces against anything built up on a basis of popular favour—entertainments like *Cavalcade*, and nine-tenths of our most flourishing newspapers—they will give no active support to a National Theatre or an intellectual enterprise like the *Week-end Review*. I am tired of their bleating in the one case and of their refusal to cough-up in the other!

sion." If only people when they meet me would imitate Sarah and talk about everything else except the theatre !

Oct. 15. Last night the *Sunday Times* was printed for the first time in the *Daily Telegraph* office, and on the *D.T.* machines. Eiluned Lewis said that on the previous Saturday St. Clement's Press, where the *S.T.* was printed for many years, was full of the ghost of old Rees. I must always remember about that old man that after all it was he who spotted my work in the *Saturday Review* and offered me the job on the *S.T.*

Everything went wrong at the change-over. Every train to every part of the country was missed, including the Paris trains. The paper did, however, get to Paris, being rushed down to Folkestone by special motor-cars and then across the Channel by a fishing-smack hired for the occasion ! To be quite accurate, we don't know yet whether the paper reached Paris. We do know it left Folkestone.

Oct. 16. A cold snap this morning, which caught me in a thin suit and summer pants. Feel I have caught a chill.

Oct. 17. Lunched with George Bishop and Hadley, the object being to get more space for the theatre in crowded weeks. Hadley particularly explained the immemorial attitude of the newspaper-proprietor. "It is a terrible thing to forego reading what Agate thinks of a little play at Kew ; it is a more terrible thing to forego a hundred pound advertisement." A most sympathetic editor.

Oct. 18. 'Flu.

Oct. 19. Still 'flu. No sleep last night, which I spent with liniments, medicine-bottles, inhalers, asthma cigarettes, and working myself up into a state of nerves.

Oct. 20. No sleep again last night. Letter from Albert Throup saying the filly foal is a marvel and that I have not yet seen it go.

Oct. 21. Fairly good night. Have had no mind for anything all week and afraid S.T. article on *This Side Idolatry*, which took me hours to do, is very dull. The forty-line article about *Command Performance* was rewritten four times and Jock very patient about it.

Have been staying at Ernest's. Bought a packet of Waverley at a shop below and noticed that the tobacconist emptied it into my pouch deftly and in a way I had never thought of. I complimented him and he said: "Live and learn, die and forget all." Why *will* people use these doom-sounding phrases when I am not feeling well?

Hadley told me this afternoon that any other newspaper after last week's débâcle would have held an inquest and sacked three or four people. Lord Camrose merely telephoned to Hadley saying: "It's a wonder you got the paper out at all—I think you did very well!"

Oct. 22. Thoroughly enjoyed the morning. Lay in bed unwashed, unshaved, and unbreakfasted and reeled off a first-class article on the play *This Side Idolatry*. Felt very Shakespearean and stopped in the middle of dictating to read aloud the best part of an act of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Jock very patient with these ebullitions and indeed I suspect him of egging me on occasionally. Altogether felt and acted very much like our Rubicon. The odd thing about me is that when I am feeling ill I look well and write my best, and when I am feeling well I look ill and over-write.

Lunched at Savage Club. Slightly dashed to find Desmond MacCarthy's article on *The Cherry Orchard* much better than the one I wrote last week. But it is silly to let oneself be worried when other people do better work. Jock was saying this morning that Shakespeare may have written *Antony and Cleopatra* because he overheard somebody saying how good Marlowe used to be, and that he just wrote it to show them!

Went in the evening to see a Sunday entertainment at the Palladium. Seymour Hicks gave his oldest sketch with inconceivable *brio* and as if the thirty-year-old jokes were occurring to him for the first time. I can understand an actor being

brilliant on a first night because of the critics. But I can never understand how he can continue night after night and long after he has exhausted invention. It must be as tedious as driving a 'bus. That, in my view, is the real paradox of the actor.

Went round to congratulate Seymour and the talk fell on his production of Brieux's *Maternité*. There was no money for anything, Seymour said, and it was desperately important for the actors that the play should run. He told me that all the members of the jury in the trial scene were old out-of-work actors whose salaries had once been £20 and £30 a week, so that Seymour had to say to each actor how kind it was of him to come forward and help him out of a difficulty !

Oct. 24. A firm of publishers asked me whether I would be an expert witness for them in a lawsuit in which they are plaintiffs over a gross infringement of one of their plays. The basis of the defence centres round the question as to what is a professional actor and what is an amateur actor. The defendants maintain that because the people who took part in the infringement have at various odd times taken trivial fees for services connected with entertainment they should be classed as regular professional actors and actresses, although they follow other professions as means of livelihood.

I replied :

107 Chalkwell Avenue,  
Westcliff-on-Sea.

DEAR SIRs,

I presume that the case is going to turn on the point whether the performance of this play was a professional performance or an amateur performance. If so your position is very delicate because, from the facts you give me, you cannot say that it is either.

This runs all through the questions you propose to put to me as expert witness. You want to know whether an auctioneer's assistant who gets ten-and-sixpence for reciting "The Fireman's Wedding" at a Freemasons' Dinner can claim the status of a professional actor. The answer is Yes and No. His profession is that of auctioneer. But for

the short time he is acting and receiving money for it, he is a professional actor and you can't get away from it.

A ploughboy or an office-boy who at week-ends carries golf clubs for hire is a professional golfer to this extent, that he is debarred from all amateur competitions. And the same applies to your part-time actor.

The law, which insists that things must be either black or white, does not easily recognise grey. Now though your actors are undoubtedly professional actors, does their employment at a performance make that performance a professional one? Again it depends. If the three professionals in a company of twelve are so much better than the remaining nine that to them are allotted the rôles of Hamlet, the Queen, and Ophelia, then obviously the performance is a professional one. If, on the other hand, they play Reynaldo, Marcellus, and Bernardo, why then obviously in my view the performance would be an amateur one.

The matter is one not of law but of sense, which is why I strongly advise you to keep out of Court. In any case invite your Counsel to turn up Boswell's Johnson at the passage where Boswell says: "Would you, Sir, deem a man a whore-monger who kept a mistress as well as a wife?" Johnson answered: "Why no, Sir, no more than I should deem a man who bought two hams to be a bacon-monger!" The illustration may be useful as showing the point at which one thing becomes another, and you would have to tell me the name of the play and the parts played by your professional actors before I could advise you whether "the fact of there being three professionals in a company of twelve constitutes the cast a professional one".

My fee for the foregoing is three guineas which will probably save you three hundred! I should require a further twenty guineas to appear in Court.

Yours faithfully,

JAMES AGATE.

Lunched at the Savage Club. Nearly lost my temper with Herman Finck, because he would have it that Glazounov was a better composer than Berlioz. However I didn't quarrel, and forgave him because of his saying that Basil Cameron, when he conducts Sibelius, looks more like a tobacco-pouch than ever!

Is there something in Finck's point that every conductor has to have a pet composer to get himself known by? That would explain why Beecham specialises in Mozart and Delius, Harty in Berlioz, Weingartner in Beethoven, Coates in Wagner and Russian music, and Wood in everything!

Attended the *première* of *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, the new Laughton film at the Leicester-Square Theatre. Usual display of flood-lighting, attendants in Tudor costume, expensive Jews and cheap celebrities. The vulgarity of all this disgusts and infuriates me. The entertainment began with the usual vile film about early film favourites with running commentary in a voice that was excruciating to listen to. In short, everything was done to make the whole thing as undignified as possible. The film in itself is good. At the end Laughton came on the stage in person dragging five of Henry's six wives with him. Why does he do this sort of thing? Irving would have stayed away. I saw Laughton come in, and he looked like an untidy schoolboy who hadn't brushed his hair for a week. If Irving *had* come, he would have made an entry like Becket and Wolsey put together and have kept the crowd back with Mephistophelean eye instead of allowing all the Jews in Christendom to slap him on the back.

Oct. 25. Get home here, to Westcliff, just after two and find a blank-verse tragedy awaiting me on which my advice is asked. It opens like this:

Blast away, O ye avenging heavens,  
May your spitels drown this paltry sod,  
Your belchings rend we wretched worms within it.  
Would all the pure and natural elements,  
The delicate air, the bathing randrops,  
The purging fire, the uncorrupted sea,  
Enrage, and storm against this bumptious life . . .

Presently an Italian nobleman of the Middle Ages harangues the Prince's Jester thus:

The Prince, your master, was the blade that killed.  
You are the hand that drove the sword to death.  
Yes, my daughter was as pink and blooming  
As the hot-house flower, till his corruption  
Entering from her virgin root did blight  
Her cheery countenance.



*Tobias-Robertson as Hamlet*





1933]

I LIE ON IT

The Jester promptly stabs the Nobleman, and rolling his dead body over says :

Ay, 'tis flesh, 'tis flesh, it gives to the boot  
Like the backside of an erring errand-boy.

The play is about twice as long as *Hamlet* and the vein is kept up to the end. Here is one last quotation :

What would a queen have a fool to do,  
The king being out with her chambermaid,  
But make her sodden with his saucy lips ?  
Ay 'tis done, it is in the code of queens.  
Must the queen lie single in the golden couch,  
When the king in the back attic frolics  
With his mistress, nay, for she has her fool,  
To tickle with his wit her fancies' thighs.

In the theatre it is absence of pace that kills. Many a miserable little piece would have been let off lightly if the management had tipped the critic a friendly wink, permitting him to go while the going was comparatively good. But to be compelled to stay on in a simulation of wakefulness while losing consciousness beneath deeper and deeper layers of boredom—this it is which envenoms a notice.

Model reply to a playwright insisting that one should visit a Sunday-night show :

25th October, 1933.

DEAR CECIL LEWIS,

Many thanks for your letter—but NO ! An exception made in favour of one Sunday-evening fiend will bring the whole devilish pack after me.

If the play is good, it will come West. But I really cannot be expected to fritter away my one free evening on plays that are going West.

Yours ever,

JAMES AGATE.

Norman O'Neill told me that Gilbert Miller wanted his music for *This Side Idolatry* to be performed to a microphone at the back of the stage and issued to the audience through loud-speakers. Norman refused, of course.

Jock asked me at lunch to-day what would be my ideal

evening, including the conquest of Everest, lounging on a beach in the South Seas, or Sarah's *Phèdre*. I said : Dinner with Geoffrey Bennett at Olympia in June, watching my horse win the harness championship, and finding a mistress I liked as well as desired waiting for me *at home*. Jock said he should get into bed with his doxy straightway, and stay there !

*Nov. 12.* On Sunday last went up to Manchester for Paul Dehn's, my godson's, twenty-first birthday.

GODFATHER. Tell me, Paul, what in your view a young man should possess who intends to conquer London.

GODSON (*after thinking*). A fine mind and a hide like a rhinoceros.

GODFATHER. A fine skin and a mind like a rhinoceros would do you a lot more good.

Stayed with Dickie Dehn, who lives in a house like a Jewish Haworth Parsonage.

ME. What induced you to buy a house next to a church ?

DICKIE. It's a populous district and I thought they'd have to buy my garden to extend the graveyard !

After a week of intensive house-hunting hit by accident upon Livingstone Cottage, a delicious little Queen Anne house on Hadley Common, twelve miles from London. Am leaving Westcliff because I cannot stand the hour's racket coming up through the East End. Also leaving Kensington Gardens Square. I have proved to myself *on paper* that 3 houses with only 1 tenanted are as cheap as 2 houses fully inhabited. Also I hope to let the other two places at some price or other. Anyhow the decorations are charming, and judging by an address-book left behind, the previous tenants knew nobody less than an Earl. The basement is pitch-dark, and Wright, the chauffeur, thinks Livingstone, who lived here in 1857, camped in it as training for his life in darkest Africa.

Signed fresh contract with B.B.C. to start in January.

Yesterday morning (Armistice Day) Jock heard this colloquy at a Covent Garden coffee-stall :

ELDERLY PORTER. They oughter stop this bleedin' poppy business.

YOUNG PORTER. Wot's up wiv you, mate? Wot did you lose in the war?

ELDERLY PORTER. Only a couple of kids at Jutland!

This would make a good start for a list of Crushing Retorts. A few days ago a discussion arose as to whether Ælfred should be pronounced Alfred or Elfred. Jock stuck out for the former, and was being very obstinate:

ME (*icily*). Are you, pray, an authority on Anglo-Saxon?

JOCK. Well, I happen to have passed the M.A. degree exam. in it at Glasgow University!

Nov. 13. Went to Brighton with George Mathew. George is an unselfish fellow who will go anywhere at a minute's notice. He is, I suppose, thirty-five, but looks a disillusioned twenty-four. Very well educated and clever, with an original mind, he does not know the difference between right and left, and before he can tell you which is his right hand has to reflect which hand he writes with. One day I said suddenly, "Which is your right hand, George?" He held it up and said seriously, "I'm sure it's this one." Was in the Navy during the war, and while at Scapa Flow being told to pull some rope with his right hand and using his left instead, let loose a string of mines in the direction of the Grand Fleet. George slept all through the explosion of the H.M.S. Vanguard, and knew nothing about it till the next day despite everybody else's commotion. If the Vanguard blew up in the day-time then George was sleeping in the day-time. Being told to row two officers to their ship he nobly took the oars. But the more George rowed the more the ship receded, and presently the crew on board saw the amazing spectacle of two officers rowing George. The shore was the Orkney Islands and the ship was the mine-layer the Sunny Devon. George always seems to me to live in a dream. But I have a feeling that this is largely on the surface and that at his office he is a very dragon for efficiency. I under-

stand that he is adamant on the subject of Unexhausted Manures, and in the matter of Wart Disease of Potatoes sea-green and incorruptible. The really surprising thing about George is that he seems able to put up with me in all my moods.

*Nov. 14.* It occurred to me to-day, *and this is the most original thought I have ever had*, that from the point of view of the next generation but one, which will probably be wearing Russian blouses, we are as much "period" as the eighteenth century is to us. Those old boys didn't realise they were period, but I do. I am, and I know that I am, early twentieth century, a walking archaism, something hopelessly quaint.

Reviewing the *Journals* of Michael Field I read this lovely sentence: "George Moore comes up. His smile is like sunshine on putty, his talk sticks to one with the intimate adhesiveness of the same material—it approaches the surface of one's personality softly and there it is, on one."

Reading in this book again to-day I find this description of the audience at the first night of Wilde's *A Florentine Tragedy* and *Salome*:

The hall full of little London. George Moore, white as a tree of silver sallows by the streams of Innisfree . . . There sat George Moore by a lady in a spring-tide of hoariness, showing his old heart in glassy reflections. And not far off the face of an angel-sheep turned into a kid's and grey with its baby old age—Max Beerbohm. Then not far off again, Symons with the snows on his juvenility, as if resting on a little pasture hill forgetting it is not an Alp.

"Michael Field" was really Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper. Both died of cancer, Edith in 1910 and Katherine in 1914. It is a humiliating thought that, while I chatter to everyone of my nerves, Katherine kept from Edith the knowledge that she too was stricken.

Surely this, from Arthur Applin's *His Final Choice*, must be the world's prize misquotation:

The little less, how much it is.

The little more, and what leagues away.

Glorious weather at Brighton, might be the South of France

in April. You could cast all Tchekhov's plays from the people on the front, which gave George and me a very amusing half-hour. There was an old man reading Braille with that air of sanctification which comes from much reading of the Bible aloud. And an itinerant preacher exhorting the promenade at large and looking exactly like Brember Wills as Captain Shotover. An old beau with fierce grey whiskers and wearing a Norfolk suit of a fine rust-red, with the knickers buckled high up over long black stockings, snub-nosed glacé-kid shoes and a cap the colour of Gregory Powder. Lots of bath chairs, and cripples and old men with silver skins drawn tightly over their cheek-bones sunning themselves with a quiet content.

Dipping into the book-boxes in the Charing Cross Road just before we left, I came across the name of Malibran. How many of to-day's Bright Young Things have heard of the greatest singer the world has ever known? After all, the situation is perhaps less unreasonable than I take it to be. If you spend your mornings trying to do Maidenhead to Bond Street in something under the half-hour, and your evenings in hitting Paris in your private Moth—why, obviously you will not have much time to bother about an opera-singer who died the year before Queen Victoria came to the throne. I bought the book and found it had a delicious description of the kind of operatic nonsense the great singers of the past had to "put over". The piece is Mr. Balfe's *Maid of Artois*. The first act begins more than handsomely. Jules de Montagnan, "careworn and exhausted with the fatigue of blighted affection", believes that Isoline, the maid, has spurned him and gone off with "the Marquis" who apparently has no other name. Broken-hearted, Jules unwillingly enlists in the Marquis's regiment. There is a grand scene in a private apartment when the Marquis avows his passion for Isoline and his determination to crush his rival, who, the sergeant informs him, is in his power as a refractory soldier. The scene now changes to the grand saloon in the palace where Isoline is discovered in a swoon surrounded by attendants chanting mournfully. Presently Isoline wakes to consciousness and sets about a recitative which

terminates in the aria, "The Heart that Once has Fondly Teemed." The second act occurs in the interior of an Indian fort where Jules is discovered in a felon's dress, having been transported for wounding a superior officer. A vessel is now seen in the offing and lands among its sailors the Maid, disguised as one of them. "Jules is not alone in identifying Isoline", and there is on board one Ninka, "a friendly negress" who purposes to help the lovers to escape. Isoline, who has now assumed the dress of a sister of charity, has several penitent airs, the time occupied thereby permitting the arrival of a second ship, this time a man-of-war. On board is the Marquis, fully recovered and appointed Governor of the Penal Settlement. The last act takes place in the deserts of Guiana. "Jules, wounded by a sentinel in his flight, is seen reclining on the ground in a state of insensibility. Isoline, watching for returning signs of animation, gives him the last drop of water to bathe his wound and then bursts forth into a paroxysm of exultation: 'The light is in his eye again, the beating at his heart.'" But the thirst of the desert is now upon Isoline. One drop of water would save her. Jules extends the flask—alas, it has been emptied for him! Madness now descends upon the Maid. "Yet she is conscious that the man for whom she has sacrificed herself is hanging over her. As nature sinks within her, she breathes a last prayer for him alone for whom in life she had lived. She faints." But it is not thus that the heroines of Mr. Balfe are permitted to bring their evening's work to a close. A military march is now heard, and the Marquis, on his way to Cayenne, enters accompanied by a numerous suite. He and Jules are reconciled, and Isoline recovers amid avalanches of roulades and florituri.

The book says that Malibran was "transcendently graced throughout". And again: "Three octaves did Malibran call into requisition in this masterpiece of execution (the finale), reaching E in alt, and making a prolonged shake, if we mistake not, on B flat in alt." Let your German opera-singers put that in their pipes and smoke it! Malibran died at Manchester on September 23rd, 1836, in a humble hotel called the Moseley Arms. She had been performing in

oratorio. She was only twenty-eight, and though doctors differed about the actual cause of death, the mourning world decided that the explanation given by the great singer Lablache was the most satisfactory: "*Son grand esprit était trop fort pour son petit corps.*" Then an extraordinary thing happened. Malibran's craven husband, de Bériot the violinist, leaving all arrangements for the funeral in the hands of a Manchester lawyer, decamped for Brussels, in order probably to possess himself of his wife's property. However that may have been, nobody ever seems to have succeeded in resuming touch with this widower-virtuoso. The book, by the way, is Alfred Bunn's *The Stage: Before and Behind the Curtain*. Bunn had more quarrels than any other manager before or since, and was almost universally execrated. He took delight in teasing Macready, whom he deemed very small beer after the greater glories of Edmund Kean, his son Charles, and Kemble. It was with Bunn that Macready had his famous brawl. To humiliate the actor the manager had insisted that he should appear in a triple bill in which a mutilated version of *Richard III* was included. The humiliation to the actor was in the implication that the public could not stand a whole evening of him as Richard, though Macready preferred the alternative and higher horse of the insult to Shakespeare. Anyhow, he blew into the manager's room and assaulted Bunn furiously, whereupon the manager bit Macready's little finger half off! The incident probably made more noise than any other theatrical dispute except, of course, the O.P. Riots. Bunn, by the way, was no fool, whatever else he may have been. I like this: "Hear that Farren has had a fit—very much doubt if it will make him lower his salary." And again: "Saw in an opposite box Dimond, the dramatic author—thought he had been hanged long ago." Charles Kean is dismissed as "a very earnest actor, with most of the peculiarities and all the faults of his renowned papa". Even so he was a jewel, in Bunn's eyes, compared with Macready. But the story I like best in the old book is that of the Scotch actor whom Malibran snubbed persistently, not only off the stage but on. At length the Scot made up his mind to ask for an explanation, which he did. Whereupon



Malibran, half laughing and half in earnest, said he always gave her the impression of wanting to kiss her. Bunn asks us to remember that at this moment Malibran was the world's idol, that peers of the realm were ready to give their coronets to press the tips of her fingers. But this did not weigh with the Scot, who exclaimed: "Gude God, wumman, is that a' ? Mak your mind easy, I wouldna kiss ye for ony conseederation !"

*Nov. 18. Idées noires, très noires*, all the time at Brighton, and I hope it's liver. Much better on my return and in fair form in the *S.T.* I rather like my description of Constance Collier in the revival of *Hay Fever*: "Magnificent, now like the wife of Herod, now like Bernhardt in the rôle of a Byzantine Empress stung by a horse-fly and neighing with fury, now like somebody in *Hypatia* wearing a Graeco-Roman bun." Didn't feel up to dressing so found myself conspicuous in a terrifically smart house.

Supped at Rules with Monty and arrived home, or rather at Ernest's, to find two communications. The first was from somebody signing him or herself "Elfin", and wondering why Lady Blessington should not on some evenings have danced naked on the dinner-table for the entertainment of Captain Jenkins's guests, and on other evenings relentlessly pursued discussions of Raphael's cartoons. Then follows this passage, in which "double-jointed" is, I think, the operative word. "I know an Irish girl, born double-jointed, to whom dancing is an instinct and a joy. To see her dancing with my children, especially the baby aged four, is something marvellous ! She always flings off practically all her clothing. So does the baby and the bigger boys. Yet she is the purest girl I have ever met—it shows in her face."

This business of turning the house at Westcliff and the flat at Kensington Gardens Square into the cottage at Hadley Green while living at Ernest's up those four flights of stairs is going to prove tedious. Have decided to redecorate only my bedroom, which was the former occupants' nursery and is painted a bright, unforgivable pink. The other decorations, in eau-de-nil and apple green, are delightful.

*Nov. 20.* Latest story of charming and popular actress alleged to have turned down an engagement saying : " But I'm *too* expensive. Why not have dear E—— ? " Asked if she would mind letting the same actress have the star dressing-room in a theatre in which they were playing together, the adorable creature said : " But of course not ! Darling E—— was a great artist when I was an infant in arms ! "

*Nov. 21.* Speech delivered yesterday afternoon at the *Sunday Times* Book Exhibition at Sunderland House :

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I propose to discuss reviewing and the harm it does, because that is a subject which can be disposed of in ten minutes, whereas if I spoke about publishers and the harm *they* do I should require all the time between now and to-morrow. The principal fault of publishers is that they publish too much, and when I hear a noise of unloading at my door I never know whether it is the coalman or another instalment of somebody's Saga.

What is the matter with reviewing may be divided into (a) reviewers and (b) their reviews. I think it utterly disgraceful that reviewers should at the same time be publishers' readers. Say that I am the reader for Messrs. Gollcape and Heinfaber, and that I turn down a novel which is immediately accepted by Messrs. Hodhutch and Chattell with a sale of eleven million copies on day of publication.

What now must I do in my paper ? If I say the book is a masterpiece I am inviting a kick in the pants from the publishers for whom I turned down the manuscript. If I say it is drivel's dregs, they tell me that it is the kind of drivel they are out to publish and I ought not to have missed it. In any case, my review of the book must be biassed. And then there is the tendency of publishers' readers who are also reviewers to allocate an unfair proportion of their attention to the work published by their own firm.

Now I come to another shameful aspect of reviewing, the reviewers who are novelists. Say that I hope to get my new novel, *The Innocence of Lady Culprit*, accepted by the Book Society. I send in my book, and by the same post—in fact they cross—there arrives for review *Susan Saddleback* the first volume of Mr. Walpole's new Saga and the latest

darling child of that Mandarin in whose bosom my own manuscript at that moment tremblingly reposes. Obviously I would sooner commit matricide, patricide and fratricide in the same afternoon than hint that Mr. Walpole had so much as misplaced a comma !

But leaving the Book Society out of it, I object on principle to reviewers who are novelists. In this matter my own hands are particularly clean. Years ago I wrote two and a half novels. On the first Humbert Wolfe expended two and a half columns in the *Saturday Review*. About the second I will only say that bits of it still seem to me great fun. I do not believe that since *Tristram Shandy* there has been any more amusing first sentence than : "Oliver Sheldon sprang, in 1882, from the loins of a Manchester chemist."

By this time I had become burdened with a publisher's contract, to discharge which I gave my secretary some notes for a plot written on the back of an envelope and told him to go back to Scotland and turn them into my third novel. This he did, living in a bothie surrounded by Stevenson's wine-red moors, martyrs' graves, whaups, porridge, and sheep.

He returned with forty thousand words. So we put our heads together and concocted a lot of that padding which makes the purveying of novels the lowest of human industries.

Arnold Bennett said in the *Standard* that our book was rotten but that it was impossible to open it anywhere without being diverted.

I now come to a statement of some importance. After the publication of this third novel, I surveyed my three novels. I decided that they did not satisfy me, and the critic in me insisted that I should write no more of them.<sup>1</sup> I arrived at this decision two years before there was any suggestion that I should become a reviewer of novels.

<sup>1</sup> It is possible that I might in time have created a public for myself as novelist, though it always ought to have been under another name. No music-hall audience is going to accept an acrobat who also sings a comic song, and *vice versa*. I know quite a number of limp writers with beards who make a comfortable living, in Sussex, by throwing off three times in two years the same nice story with the same nice characters under different names. It appears that there is an enormous public in Cheltenham and Buxton for this kind of thing. I suppose these writers' sales run into 15,000 and 20,000, whereas mine never reached more than 3,000. The remarkable thing about my three novels is that two of them sold 3,000 copies exactly, while *Blessed Are The Rich* was three short of 3,000. I am told that this is not failure.

Just think what this means. Of my first novel Humbert Wolfe said that it was in the Wells and Bennett class. The *Manchester Guardian* liked my second. Of my third Arnold Bennett said that he could not put it down. Yet I did not consider my three books to be good enough. Now there descends upon me a weekly avalanche of novels lauded to the skies by my colleagues and which I know to be not one-tenth as good as the work I deliberately and conscientiously renounced.

I know what some of you are thinking. You are thinking that I am inconsistent and that, while refusing to be simultaneously novelist and reviewer, I did at one time try to be both playwright and dramatic critic. You are thinking of the play called *Blessed Are The Rich* made from my second novel. I had no hand whatever in this. C. E. Openshaw, the author of *All The King's Horses*, took the novel and made a play out of it, of which I did not even see the manuscript till the first rehearsal. When I went on the stage at the Vaudeville Theatre to say that the play was Openshaw's I could not be heard in the booing! As the piece was a dreadful failure I have up to now obviously been unable to disclaim responsibility for it. In view of my present position I must do so.

If I could write good creative work, I should not bother to be a critic, though that is not the reason why I *am* a critic. The reason I am a critic is that I have, and always have had, an urge towards criticism and none at all towards creative work.

Take up any paper and, to judge by the reviews, you will see that twenty-four masterpieces in fiction alone are produced weekly. Now when, three years ago, I started reviewing, the first thing I did was to put up an enormous number of shelves to cope with the masterpieces which I felt I should want to keep. Out of all the novels which I have been invited to review in the last three years I have kept four! These are *Apple Pie Bed* by Edward Charles, *The Fortnight in September* by R. C. Sherriff, *All Night At Mr. Stanyhurst's* by Hugh Edwards, and *Lost Horizon* by James Hilton. For all the other fiction which has been sent to me for review I have nothing but the derision due to second-class work. A novel called *Love on the Dole* by Walter Greenwood was not sent to me by the publisher; Alan

Monkhouse sent it me from Manchester. It is a masterpiece. I particularly ask you to note that not even an archangel could review books on which his opinion was not invited. Has a book called *The Waves* been published? And is there some story about a dog called Flush? Officially I have no knowledge of such volumes—and this doubtless covers me with regard to other masterpieces you are supposing I have missed.

I can only attribute the current over-praise of novels to the fact that reviewers are themselves novelists. If, as novelists, they are not back-scratchers, then they are incompetent; and if they are not incompetent, then they must deem praise to be their paper's "note", and their papers to like praise because without it they are afraid advertisements will fall off! Newspapers, ladies and gentlemen, have sunk to this, that they cut down reading matter to the lowest point that advertisers will think permissible. For even advertisers, who are still lower in the scale of creation than novelists, have realised that there must be something on a page to read besides their advertisements.

To sum up. First, there are too many books and too much notice is taken of them, and second, reviewers in my opinion should not be publishers' readers, or novelists, or anything except critics. I say they should choose which side of the fence they are going to be on, and I say this the more boldly because I myself made the choice. And made it long before the fence, for me, came into existence.

The *Daily Telegraph* brilliantly condenses this as follows :

Mr. James Agate, the dramatic critic, with the Earl of Cottenham in the chair, said that when he heard a noise outside his house he wondered whether it was the coal-man or the latest instalment of somebody's Saga. (Loud laughter.)

The room was the worst acoustically that I have ever spoken in, and one had to bellow like a buffalo to be heard in the first row.

Went back to Ernest's, wrote 2,000 words, took a bowl of soup and a pint of Bollinger about midnight, followed by four calomel pills. Read Lady Mary Meynell's *Life* and note that

she remembers her great-grand-aunt whose grandfather had his bride given to him at his wedding by Charles II.

Feel much better this morning. What if all maladies of soul and spirit are merely liver?

*Nov. 22.* Cyril Maude in *Cabbages and Kings*. Pap for kids. Have hardly ever been so utterly bored.

*Nov. 23.* Have been reading Hugh Kingsmill's *Samuel Johnson*. The best thing in it is the picture of Boswell, rather like Clarence, false and fleeting but not perjured.

It is three o'clock, and this evening has been and is one of the very few times I have been sufficiently moved by a play to write about it before going to bed. The play was Sherwood's *Acropolis* and I wanted it to succeed because of the poor luck the author had with *The Road to Rome*. It was not the principals who moved me to-night but three minor actors, or rather three exquisite artists whose rôles were minor. These were Hugh Wright as a gently ironic Socrates in a remarkable make-up, Eliot Makeham as Anaxagoras, a lovely portrait of old age and scepticism both silver, and Denys Blakelock as a witty, credible Aristophanes. I don't think the play will succeed as there is nothing in it for women playgoers; and Gladys Cooper as Aspasia is no more than the unexciting hub of it all. She is developing an extraordinary decency in putting on and appearing in goodish plays with poorish parts for herself. To-night was the first time in my experience that specially composed music has been played on a gramophone instead of a flesh and blood orchestra. Norman O'Neill was the sufferer.

Supped alone at the Savoy, turtle soup, gruyère and a jug of lager. Told George Robey about moving and he said the first thing to secure was the electricity and the gas. I agree. One must be able to see and keep warm; washing will do later.

*Nov. 25.* When does a man begin to die? Up to now I have always been able to get back to the meridian of health by taking exercise and just not drinking or smoking. But the time must come when all these will not avail, and one

will have struck the moment when there is no more life on tap, as it were, and one begins to dwindle. I am 56. Have I four more years of good recuperation?

Foreseeing the time when I may not be able to work I shall want something to look back on, and therefore I am gingering up my work *now* to read good *then*. Or will even that satisfaction be denied? Won't one just not want anything at all? That, of course, would be the real death. It has been occurring to me lately that if death is real death and not the prelude to something else we shall never know the how and why of things. Owing to sentimentalities of the "beyond the grave" order—though St. Paul gives them a grand coating of words—I have always thought, or even supposed, deep down in my mind, even taken for granted, that one would one day *know*. But if we don't? Suppose it all really is a secret. What a sell! Even the parsons and the priests won't know they were wrong all the time. The other day in a monumental sculptor's Tom Tiddler's Ground I saw a stone with an angel clinging to it. On the stone was scrawled in blue chalk SOLD. I hate the idea of Evolution. You cannot evolve without discarding, and to be discarded contains a horrid hint of impermanence. Besides, Omnipotence, if it be Omnipotence—I am afraid to use the word God—can have no need of Evolution. I am inclined to think that there *is* Evolution, but that Somebody already knows all about Evolution and where it will end. Like an experiment of which the end is foreseen, though this is first cousin to Mr. Curdle's "sort of one-ness, a kind of universal dove-tailedness". My best hope is in a rearrangement of the Time dimension, on the lines that Has-Been Is, no past and no future but a permanent Now. That would be a good working Eternity. Given health I want nothing better than this world, which has beauty and effort sufficient to content me. To stop now and re-live my life for ever and ever wouldn't be bad. Lots of hell, but plenty of heaven, thank God! At the same time I realise that all this has puzzled better brains than mine, and that I should be more usefully occupied in changing my spectacles which are beginning to give me headaches.

Lunched at the Savage with José Levy, Isidore de Lara and

Jean Joseph-Renaud. Renaud is the ex-amateur world-champion fencer and a *littérateur* of sorts. Told some amusing stories and how everything that Pierre Loti wrote is pure fantasy. The Icelandic fisherman lives so much among decaying fish that he stinks to knock you down even at five hundred yards. All the perfumes of Arabia will not, I suppose, sweeten that walloping hand. Renaud talked also of Sardou and said : "Ce n'était pas de l'art mais de l'adresse."

Called at S.T. office and corrected my proof. Asked Hadley, who was looking ill after an abscess, why he did not take a holiday. "Physician, heal thyself!" he replied. Motored to Barnet and stopped at a telephone kiosk. I had written : "The one thing an Aspasia forfeits is the right to snub ; Miss Cooper was as genteel as an icicle and as heartening !" It occurred to me that the first half of the sentence convicts me of thinking Victoriously about a Greek matter, so I arranged to have it deleted. The house is getting on very well and is going to be charming. On the way back went to another kiosk and arranged for the phrase "ferocity of predestination" in connection with Alcibiades to be altered to "fury of predestination".

Still delighted with Kingsmill's *Johnson*. There is a brilliant analysis of Boswell as the goader and drawer-out of his subject : "The scenes in Boswell's Life may therefore be grouped in three categories : those which he provoked intentionally, those which he provoked unintentionally, and those which he absorbed as a disinterested spectator." I do not think these distinctions have been made before.

Jock's game of asking people how they would choose to pass twelve hours from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. goes on merrily. I think it should be limited to things feasible in a person's life-time. At least I construed it so, or else I should have wanted to meet Semiramis, spend an hour at a Roman circus, another with the Marquis de Sade, listen to Nero fiddling and Johnson rending somebody. Here the scope is too big.

Nov. 27. The post brought two amusing communications.

The first is a postcard objecting to my use in the S.T. of the word "bicep". The writer says : "One can no



more have a bicep than wear a knicker or a stay, or be afflicted with a diabete or a scabie. Such writing, is, so to speak, ball ! ”

The second communication was a letter about my review of Dame Ethel Smyth's *Female Pipings in Eden*. Dame Ethel's plaint is that because she is a woman her works are hardly ever performed, and I asked whether if she were not a woman they would be performed at all. My correspondent, entering what he calls a caveat for women, asks whether I do not “take a biassed view of this interesting creation? What about Sarah Bernhardt? Have you ever read the biography of that incredible woman?” He concludes by saying that if Rebecca West had my job on the *Express* she would be “quite as trenchant, and perhaps a little more of a gentleman”. I sent the letter to Rebecca.

There was a great affair at the Savage Club last night. We took the Little Theatre and gave a performance. Mark Hambourg and Benno Moiseiwitsch played the Tschaikowsky Piano Concerto on two pianos. At dinner before the show somebody asked what Nancy Price's first part was. I said Calypso, and Peter Page said it was a good job it wasn't Totalcalypso. At the show the critics present were called on to the stage to criticise a sketch in which Cedric Hardwicke had appeared as Shakespeare. I was found asleep in the audience. Our parody of ourselves, written by Harold Simpson, went enormously, and here it is :

### “THE CRITICS”

*(The FIVE CRITICS enter and seat themselves on chairs. There is a slight pause.)*

LITTLEWOOD. Well?

PAGE. Well?

DEANS. Well?

AGATE. Well?

BISHOP. What about this sketch?

*(Another slight pause.)*

LITTLEWOOD. Well, I should start by saying that Shakespeare's been very much in the air this year.

PAGE. You mean the open air.

DEANS. Yes, it's been a lovely summer for the kids.

BISHOP (*to AGATE*). What did you think of last night's Portia?

AGATE. She'd have made a very good Shylock!

LITTLEWOOD. She certainly had pounds of flesh.

(*Pause.*)

BISHOP. Well, what about this sketch?

DEANS. What sketch?

BISHOP. The sketch we've been asked to criticise.

PAGE. Who wrote it?

LITTLEWOOD (*looking at programme*). It doesn't say.

PAGE. How can we tell whether it's good if we don't know who wrote it?

AGATE. Don't be so palimpsestuous, Peter. That's pure Shaw!

LITTLEWOOD. Yes, Shaw said the same thing—only much more cleverly—in this lovely little theatre.

BISHOP. *Fanny's First Play.*

DEANS. I've got an aunt called Fanny.

AGATE (*absently*). *La plume de ma tante est dans le jardin.*

PAGE. How true!

(*Pause.*)

BISHOP. Well, what about this sketch?

DEANS. What sketch?

BISHOP. The sketch we've been asked to criticise.

PAGE. Well, on the Edmund Kean Centenary the other day I went down to Richmond with Seymour Hicks to lay a wreath on Kean's grave. We found it, as we thought, but just as we were about to deposit the wreath the oldest inhabitant came along and told us the grave was in another part of the churchyard. This happened five times with five different oldest inhabitants, before we finally got rid of the wreath. As we came away Seymour remarked: "With all his vaults he was a great actor!"

EGO

AGATE. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

DEANS. I never saw Kean. I like Colman on the films.

LITTLEWOOD (*chuckling*). Kean—Colman—*très moutarde!*

PAGE. Don't use French mustard, Littlewood. That's poaching on Agate's preserves.

AGATE. *Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner.*

(*Pause.*)

BISHOP. Well, what about this sketch?

DEANS. What sketch?

BISHOP. The sketch we've been asked to criticise.

AGATE. Don't you see it all boils down to what our great French colleague, Marcel Boulestin, said in his well-known book, *Le Théâtre before Racine* . . .

PAGE. *Avant Racine!*

AGATE. I accept your correction, Peter. *Le Théâtre avant Racine*. What Marcel says is that the French *optique du théâtre* is marked by a *je ne sais quoi* which to the English must always make it so much *bouillabaisse*. I hate to insist upon the obvious.

DEANS. That's what my missus always says.

LITTLEWOOD. But how can a critic avoid the obvious?

PAGE (*cynically*). Simply by staying away from the theatre.

(*Pause.*)

DEANS. Well, what about this sketch?

BISHOP. What sketch?

DEANS. The sketch we've been asked to criticise.

BISHOP (*yawning*). Well, I was lunching the other day . . .

AGATE (*yawning*). Who with?

BISHOP. Charlie Cochran . . .

(*All snore.*)

After the show went on to a party at Herbert Morgan's, where this dialogue took place:

H. M. How many houses have you now, James?

J. A. Three, and I call them Windsor, Sandringham and Balmoral.

REGGIE POUND. All in the same street?

*Nov.* 28. Lunched with James Douglas who said : " What is wrong with the modern newspaper is that it is never two days alike. After all the man who subscribes to a paper on Monday likes to recognise it again on Tuesday."

Went in the evening to the Garrick Theatre, where they are trying to revive the old music-hall. There was a chairman's table with Charles Austin as chairman, but owing to the L.C.C. only ginger-beer allowed. Growlers stationed outside the theatre and old-fashioned notices stuck up inside. Audience consisted almost entirely of young Yids and their women-folk. Round the chairman's table were Harry Preston, Bertram Mills, A. P. F. Chapman, Malcolm Campbell, Jimmy Wilde, Kid Lewis, Rev. C. B. Mortlock, not wearing his dog-collar, George Bishop, Noel Curtis-Bennett, and myself. Harry Preston looked as though he thrives on operations. As much the old beau as ever, and still seeming to take Jimmy Wilde under his wing. I still foolishly and fatuously regard Jimmy as the greatest genius I have ever set eyes on. You can match Shaw with Voltaire, Bernhardt with Rachel, Hobbs with Grace. But no other boxer has ever given two stone away and been uniquely superior to all others in his own class. No man except Shakespeare. Other boxers abide our question. Not Jimmy. When I first knew him Wilde looked to be a wistful human scarecrow, with a yonderly expression that suggested the chorister in a decline. Belcher who, some twenty years ago, drew him at the National Sporting Club having the tape bound round his hands, did not see him so but gave him the face of a wizened old man. This seemed supremely untrue then, and the contemporary photographs do not bear Belcher out ; the odd thing is that Jimmy has now grown to look exactly like Belcher's cartoon. I sat next to Kid Lewis, another grand fighter. We were all introduced, and Chapman got the most applause.

Ernest told me this true story of two soldiers from Walsall who, during the war, were accosted by an arm-waving Frenchman anxious to obtain some information. One of them went on ahead, leaving his mate to deal with the stranger. Presently the mate caught his friend up, and No. 1 said, " Well, wot did 'e want ? " No. 2 replied, " Aw dunno. 'E started jabberin' "

some bloody lingo, so I 'its 'im in the bloody ear-'ole !” Walsall, says Ernest who was born there, would see nothing remarkable in this tale.

An interesting talk with the little barber over the way, a Dublin Jew of my own age. He had a bad nervous breakdown some four years ago, could not cross the street and would go off into floods of tears. Doctors no good, so he set about curing himself by sheer will-power. For six months he took 4 pints of milk a day and a weekly 2½ lbs. of cod-liver oil. No smoke and no drink. Walked in the park for 2 hours every day, and every Wednesday went to Clacton by boat. Went to bed by himself every night at 8 o'clock and rose at 8. Was cured in six months and kept most of the treatment up for another twelve. Defied the doctors and came out of hospital to treat himself. There's courage for you !

A delightful *casus belli* has arisen. There was an account in yesterday's *Times* of the exhumation last summer of the bodies of the little Princes in the Tower. The bones found in 1674 under a staircase in the White Tower were assumed to be those of the young Princes and were buried as such by Charles II's order in Henry VII's Chapel, Westminster Abbey. After examination last summer they were re-inurned, and the Dean of Westminster read part of the Burial Service over them. A fuss is now being made because the Princes were members of the Roman Catholic Church of the England of the pre-Reformation days, and therefore the rites should have been Roman Catholic and conducted by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. Against this is urged the legal continuity of the present Anglican Church with the pre-Reformation Church of this country. Charming !

Supped at the Café Royal with Donald Calthrop. There were some other people present, and the talk turned on the poverty of modern acting. A young woman objected that I was comparing Laughton, Hardwicke, Evans and the others “ who are young, with Irving, Ellen Terry, Mrs. Kendal and all your great ones after they had attained maturity ”. She said, “ What was Irving like when he was young ? ” And Calthrop very finely answered : “ Irving was never young ! ”

1933]

I LIE ON IT

*Dec. 4, to Dec. 13.* 'Flu, tonsilitis, etc. Extremely miserable, though conscious of not being really ill. On the 8th was the removal to Barnet and also Elisabeth Bergner's first night. Both events found me on my back at Ernest's and unable to move. On the 10th moved to a pleasant hotel in Pembridge Square, so as to be under my doctor's eye. As good as being at a nursing home though not so strict. For me it is a nursing home with a drink licence! Worked myself into a fever over my Sunday article, tonsilitis or no tonsilitis, and wrote and re-wrote it. It was not a "notice" of the Bergner, but merely asked what is a great actress.

*Dec. 21.* Mills's Circus at Olympia. Usual circus, usual luncheon, usual speech by Lord Lonsdale on the absence of cruelty. I should like to be let into the secret of how a forest-bred lion is peacefully persuaded to park his royal person on a yard of red plush on the top of a flight of steps and sit up and beg like a poodle.

*Dec. 28.* Spent the day hanging pictures at Barnet. In the front room all my old prints, etc. In the wee dining-room did what Monty calls "plasterers", i.e. plastered the walls with my modern pictures so that there isn't an inch of space uncovered. All the photos of actors and actresses, my Sarahs and Réjanes, and the one or two playbills Jock gave me have gone in the hall and up the stairs to the first landing, then boxers to the second landing, and horses to the third.

"They've cleared up the straw in the passage, and life can begin again." Left the "nursing home".

## 1934

I never really mind quarrelling with C. B. He is a great showman, a great artist and a great baby—all three in equal proportions. He cannot bear adverse criticism because he cannot believe that one can honestly disagree with anything upon which he has spent his brains, his taste and his affection. Your vulgar manager's point is the very different one that the critic is under the obligation to praise anything and everything upon which he has spent money. At the moment Charles and I are "not speaking", as the servants say. But we shall be falling on each other's necks presently.<sup>1</sup>

*Jan. 9.* Ernest told me an artful thing that happened the other day. A retired East End baker, worth £30,000, is supposed to be dying, and he won't make a will. There are two nephews, and one says to the other: "Uncle wants you, when you go to the hospital to-day, to bring a will-form." This is pure invention, the idea being that the Uncle, with his East End 'cuteness, will leave the money to the nephew who has not been eager for it. But the younger nephew, being a Cockney of purest water, twigs the plant and blows the gaff to Uncle. Sheer Maupassant.

*Jan. 15.* Party last night at Betty Ricketts'. Clever hostess who entertains her guests as well as feeds them. Plies you with drink and sets you down at a bridge-table with three good players. An impulsive, generous creature.

<sup>1</sup> We did, at Manchester, where Charles was producing a new revue and I was showing a pony. There was no premeditation about the meeting, which happened in the hall of the Midland Hotel. At sight we rushed together "like two clouds over the Caspian", only friendly ones, Charles wishing me success with the pony and I wishing him all the best for *Streamline*. Alan Herbert, who was there, said it was most affecting, but that Charles ought to have arranged for a press photographer.

Jan. 17. Reading Rossi and Hone's *Swift, or the Egotist* I came across this, which *exactly* describes my fits of depression :

But the most important thing of all—and the observation has never been made in connection with Swift's malady—is that proximity of the vertiginous centres to the gastric and hypogastric centres brings about a state of anxiousness. Swift often spoke of fear of giddiness, then of fear of deafness, and these fears overshadowed his life, even when he had no actual attacks. It is only now that we can be sure that the anxiousness arose from nervous grounds. The so-called "hypogastric" fears are not fears of *something*, but pure, objectless *anxia*. This has nothing to do with cerebral troubles, even if it often accompanies nervous troubles. Swift sought to find a reason for his anxiousness which should have something to do with his attacks, and therefore felt it as a fear of again becoming giddy and deaf. But, on the contrary, the same troubles which made him giddy and deaf brought him anxiousness. He tended always to be apprehensive, and his naturally highly strung condition was thereby aggravated. This deepened later on into a truly dark conception of the world ; but it was, emphatically (as Wilde and Bucknill clearly prove), not a question of insanity or of degeneration of the cerebral faculties.

So it is stomach, after all !

Jan. 18. The old Morris-Cowley having conked out, and patchable for a very few weeks, and being worth exactly 50 shillings in part exchange and exactly nothing to sell without buying, I have been forced to get a new car. Chose a Vauxhall 14 h.p. open sports four-seater. Black and scarlet. Delivery in about 5 weeks. Cost £247 10s. But there are allowances amounting to £27 10s. either off the Vauxhall or on the Morris-Cowley, and I get the car for £35 down and about £10 a month for 18 months, plus interest.

Jan. 21. Lady Martin-Harvey and Madeleine Cohen are the two kindest women I know. The Martin-Harveys have hearts as big as a parish, and if you die on their hands



they bury you. Madeleine is proud of you if you are somebody, while finding time to be the patron saint of nobodies. Loves nursing failures even better than successes.

*Jan. 22.* Excellent concert at the Savage Club on Saturday night. George Bishop in the chair. Giovanni, the conjurer, did some marvellous card-tricks and took a man's braces off! Mark and Benno played the Liszt Concerto for two Pianos, a work never performed. But why must they play loud enough for two Albert Halls?

Have hit upon a device for saving money. Shall put £2 into my pocket every morning and £3 each on Saturday and Sunday. At night I shall put all I have left into a petty cash drawer, and empty this weekly into the Post Office Savings Bank. Shall put into same account all odd sums from extra bits of work, sale of books, etc.

Heard from Albert that Tulip is wintering well. Had the Pascal-like thought to-day that an inch added to Tulip's front would alter my entire world. Meanwhile I am without a novice for the coming season.

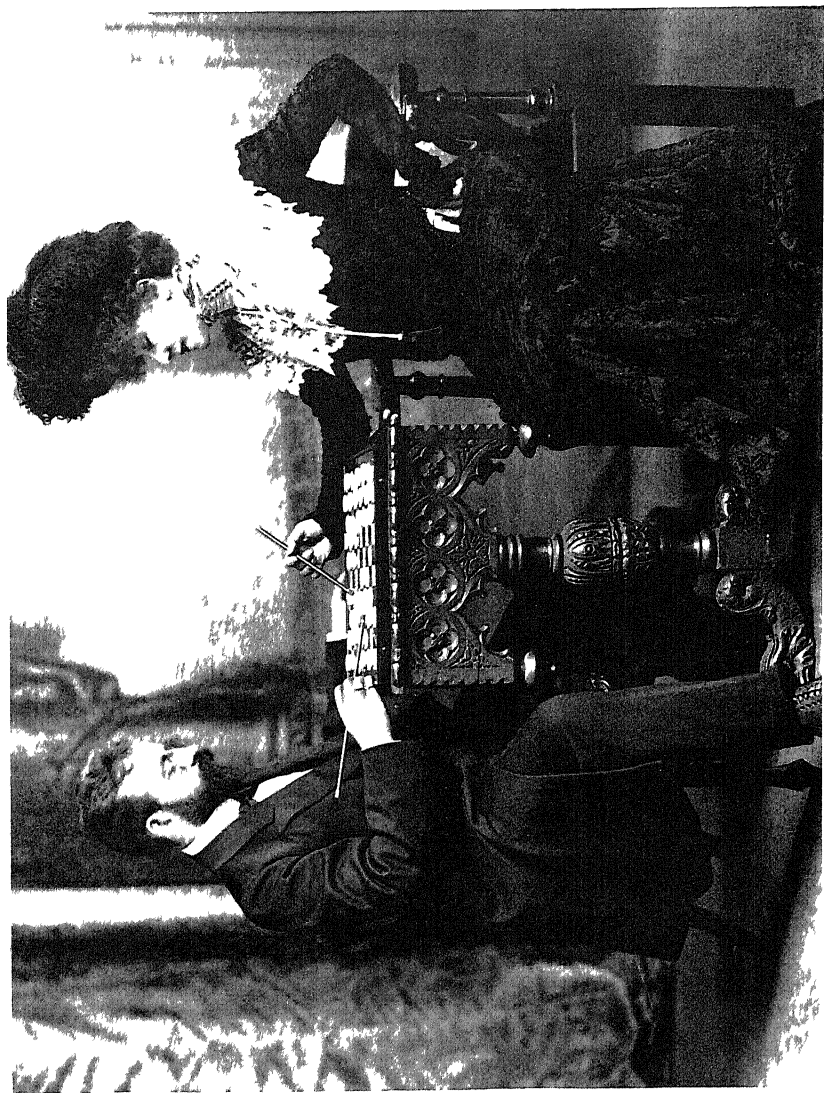
My knee has gone wrong. This is the one I hurt during the War, meaning that I fell off a horse in England. Jock says that the leg, and probably the other one too, will stiffen permanently so that when I sit down I shall have both stuck out in front of me. Presumably when I go to bed they will be pointing ceiling-wards. Age, I do abhor thee! And Jock likewise.

Opened Post Office Savings Account with £12.

*Jan. 31.* Went to Birmingham on Sunday last.

The driver of the hired Daimler was an old man getting past his job. He attempted to rush some traffic signals, and was stopped by the road signalman who came out of his box and said with extraordinary mildness: "Wot's the game? Do you want the same thing to 'appen as last night? My mate was killed 'ere by a bloke doing wot you're doing!"

Went last night to the Alhambra to see Stoll's production of *Henry V*, a thing of shreds and patches, meaning Shakespeare's shreds and all the extraneous purple patches Stoll has



*Sarah Bernhardt und her Manager*



been able to sew on. Setting like the transformation scene at a Lyceum pantomime. Only it doesn't transform! Music in which Norman O'Neill for once in his exquisite career has allowed himself to be moderately commonplace, though occasionally redeems this by witty quotation. For example, the troops march off to Agincourt behind a gauze singing Autolycus's "Jog on, jog on" to a variant of "Tipperary". Norman tells me that he has fifty-one entries for the orchestra!

I thought some of the acting shocking and found nearly all of it inaudible. The unmasking of the three traitors which Benson used to make so fine was quite unmoving, and the whole thing was tawdry in the extreme. Theatre about one-third full. This means that the situation which is always cropping up has cropped up again. I want more than anything to encourage Shakespeare in the West End, and they put something on so badly that I can't honestly praise it, and won't!

The truth of the matter is that the theatre is going through a lean period of second-rate actors and poor productions, with all the young bloods hating to acknowledge that they are living in a second-rate period and all the young critics not daring to say so. The result is that I have to hold the fort for the best without any compromise, just as Lewes did who saw Edmund Kean and was screamed at by everybody for saying that Charles Kean was second-rate!

Returning to Shakespeare, I am not too happy about what is going on at the Old Vic. Charles Laughton told me the other night that they were creating a new and better-class permanent audience. He didn't seem to see that a theatre only holds so many people, and that bringing in a new audience must mean turning out the old. Now what is going to happen when Charles leaves the theatre? The old audience will have gone and I don't believe the new one will remain. If this happens, much better to have left the Old Vic. in the undisturbed care of my esteemed Lilian Baylis, who has some at least of the characteristics of the Rock of Ages.

*Feb. 16.* Terrific fortnight of horse-coping, or attempted horse-coping. Decided must have pony to complete my string for the shows. It is cheaper to show 3 horses than 2,

and on the principle of feeding people. If this principle did not work, hotels would have to go out of business.

Started out on Friday last in a not too good Humber from the hire people. Left about five, dined at Doncaster and reached Scarborough at eleven. On to Middlesbrough next day, Saturday, and saw a charming pony, Smokeless Diamond. Gave a *grand* show. Back to Birmingham to fetch Albert Throup. Slept Birmingham. Started back with Albert for Middlesbrough on Sunday morning. Lunched at Sheffield, arrived Middlesbrough in the late dusk, had pony out in the dark. Not good show. We stayed at a pretentious semi-country hostelry, where we encountered Galli-Curci mounting the stairs encumbered with lilies, and the wall-papers were all dado and trailers of expensive-looking flowers, and the dinner was in French including the date, and beginning "Les hors-d'œuvres". The landlady was Scotch and visibly annoyed next morning when I ordered "*Les* ham and eggs". Saw pony again on Monday, when he gave a show much below Saturday's. Coughing, and I think seedy. Decided to leave him for the present. Then went off to Preston, Crewe and Birmingham, then back to Preston and then home to London arriving seven last night, having bought nothing and done close on 1,500 miles. Arthur very tired, so gave him four days' holiday. Self very tired, so decided to buckle to. Letter to-night to say pony is ill. Wire this morning reporting him better.

A bundle of correspondence to deal with when I got back last night. Here's one letter.

*Feb. 14th.*

Reader of the *Sunday Times* hoped you were at last going to write straightforward criticisms, and give up writing the "pretentious rubbish" you force upon them at so much a column.

Few of its readers can have the patience or the time to wade through them. A plain statement about the merit of the play and of the actors is all that is required.

But what a counsel of perfection! "A plain statement about the merit of the play and of the actors." Nobody since Clement Scott has done this.

1934]

I LIE ON IT

*Feb.* 25. I am amused whenever a book of mine comes out and the reviewers start that old jabber about gusto. To listen to them you would think that Sir Henry Wood, the Postmaster-General, me, or anybody else doing a hackneyed task were bridegrooms springing in our beds. Can nobody realise that a critic may go to the theatre in as little mood for enjoying himself as the actor may have for playing King Lear? It is technique that pulls them both through. It is much if I am interested in one play out of ten. But I am thankful for this, that when there is something really first-class—say, a play by Jean-Jacques Bernard, a Cochran revue, or any performance of *Hedda Gabler*—I am more excited than ever. But nine times out of ten the theatre has become a place

Where critics sit and hear each other groan,  
And ennui shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs.

*March* 2. Lunched with Hamish Hamilton and Graham Robertson at the Jardin des Gourmets. Talk so good that I have no idea what we ate and drank. G. R. is like a spar of the 'nineties washed up on the beach of to-day, and a very charming and responsive spar, full of sly fun.

He told us of a dreadful piece of symbolic painting by Spencer Stanhope, in which Patience seated on a commodious tombstone smiled at Grief in the person of a widow sitting on the ground surrounded by her weeds. He suggested to some of Stanhope's entourage, though not to the painter himself, a companion allegory entitled "Amazement on thy Mother Sits".

J. A. Is Stanhope dead?

G. R. Not more than usually.

H. H. But is he actually dead?

G. R. Yes, of course. We all are!

Robertson asked us to go round to see his pictures, and in the car talked about the films and how he hated them. The most illustrious of our younger comédiennes had sent him to see her new film with a request for a report thereon.

G. R. : I said the close-ups made her face look like a billiard-table and the amplifiers gave her the voice of an elephant

gargling. She just smiled, and any lady who can smile when you unload all that on her must be a real lady !

The house is a museum with Graham Robertson for curator. Having duly admired the Rossettis, Burne-Joneses, Sargents, a not very good Whistler, and a magnificent Albert Moore, we were asked if we could stand the Blakes, which are tremendous. The finest, over the mantelpiece, is a picture of God creating Adam. G. R. maintains that this is better than Michael Angelo, who forgot to make God *tired*, whereas Blake's Almighty is exhausted after the work of Creation.

The room was littered with photographs of Sarah, and on the staircase was a drawing of G. R. by her with a scrawled date which looks like " 18881 " !

G. R. : " She just put down a lot of 8's and then went on to something else ! "

Also on the staircase a diabolically clever drawing by James Pryde of Irving as Dubosc in *The Lyons Mail*, and G. R.'s own pastel portrait of Ellen Terry " done while she was drying her hair ". G. R. said he had given up talking to young people about Irving because they just can't understand what you mean : " I should think he'd frighten them out of their wits."

*March 3.* On Saturday last dined at Oxford with the Mermaid Society, the purpose of which is to drink rum punch to the " souls of poets dead and gone ". Answered for the guests and was, I think, in fair form. Took as my theme Butler's reflection in the Note-Books that it was a good job we proceed from the cradle to the grave and not the other way about. Elaborated this with illustration of the human body as railway-train heading for tunnel obviously too small for it. Argued further that while being snuffed out like a candle is tragic, to attend the original kindling must be ignominious. Referred to some female's novel about the soul-state of a Spanish matador, and asked what we should think of a book by a Spanish Miss recounting the soul-history of a Tottenham Hotspur centre-forward.

Usual business of menu-card signing followed, and was told of a financier who never signed one of these without crossing

it! Dinner was at Christchurch, a beautiful college but too short of w.c.s. Had to walk nearly a quarter of a mile and then found a lot of people queuing up. This prompted me to say to the President of Magdalen: "If it had been a question of *making* water do you think, Sir, that Philip Sidney would have said what he did?"

Leo and Ernest in good form these days. Ernest complaining of the difficulty of keeping a roof over his head, Leo said that for forty years he had found it a struggle to keep himself under other people's roofs!

Conversation between Ernest and Jock.

JOCK. What was the fog like in town yesterday?

ERNEST. Terrible—I spent the afternoon walking round in circles.

JOCK. Vicious circles I've no doubt!

Bought the pony up in Yorkshire.

The world gets more and more astonishing. All this Rasputin business is to me totally unreal, like the film material into which it has been made. Now that the Princess Youssouppoff has brought an action against the Metro-Goldwyn people and the case is being tried in our High Courts before an English Judge, I am bound to believe that these people really existed and are not a part of cloud-cuckoo-land. Talking about this the other day, somebody said: "But I don't see why you shouldn't believe Youssouppoff's account of the murder. After all, it's a matter of historical fact." To which Leo said: "A fact does not become historical until everybody who can substantiate it is dead."

I have come to the conclusion that there are some minds with which it must always be impossible to establish contact. In a wireless talk the other day I had this passage: "A friend of mine has a beautiful Matisse in which a young woman sitting on a not very low chair has an arm so long that its wrist doubles itself on the ground. Yet if this arm were the right length, the picture would be ruined. Now when a second-rate artist like Lawrence paints Kemble as Hamlet with his head half the size it ought to be, all the world cries out. This can only mean that the liberties with truth taken by second-



class artists matter enormously, whereas in the case of the first-class they don't matter at all ! ”

A listener replied to this as follows : “ I do not think art is untrue. In the picture which you said showed a lady's arm much too long, I believe a photograph would have come out the same. I have taken photographs which resulted in legs being two or three times too long.”

Again, I had mentioned the picture by Ambrogio de Predis in the National Gallery entitled, “ Angel Playing on Musical Instrument ”. “ The Instrument, which is more or less fiddle-shaped, is held near the chin, but insufficiently cuddled ; and it is obvious that the angel could have no control over it. The bow is at least two inches out of place. If the angel held the fiddle in the manner used by every fiddler that ever was, the picture would be ruined.” About this my correspondent said : “ I believe the angel you mentioned, playing a violin, was deliberately made to do it in a way not real, because if it were not unreal, no one would believe it to be an angel ! ”

*March 6.* Lunched with Leo yesterday at the Étoile in Charlotte Street.

LEO (*very impressively*). Betty Ricketts has taken a great load off my mind. She has promised to have me cremated.

J. A. When ?

E. V. Lucas was in a melancholy mood when he went off to America the other day. Said he was afraid he shouldn't come back. Asked who he would like to write the obituary notice in the *S.T.* he replied, “ James Agate.” I forget who told me this. I am so astonished that I can hardly believe it.

*March 8.* Letter from George Mathew :

12 Tavistock Place,  
W.C.2.

MY DEAR JIMMIE,

I know now what we ought to have said to the idiot at your club last night who repeated the old parrot-cry that “ perpetual peace would not be good enough for humanity ”

and that "an occasional war is necessary to keep our souls alive". We should have asked him to be explicit about how often wars are advisable ; how long they should last, and what might be regarded as a satisfactory number of persons killed, wounded and crippled for life ; whether the decade after the Great War could truthfully be said to have revealed any notable resurgence of idealism and nobility, or the converse (*vide* the contemporary novels, plays and newspapers) ; whether the conflict should be conducted with gentlemanly restraint or with the maximum scientific devilishness, in order to do our souls the maximum amount of good ; whether a cause should be found for the war, or that formality be dispensed with wholly ; whether the bold and physically fit persons who are the first to be killed in a war might not have produced, had they survived, a better progeny than the cautious and neurasthenic persons who manage to be left alive to become the parents of the race ; and finally whether it might not be logical to amend our prayer and cry "Give us War in Our Time, O Lord !"

Yours always,

GEORGE MATHEW.

P.S. The League of Nations would come in handy. Once the salutary qualities of warfare were generally made known the whole thing could be organised from Geneva, which would see that the dangers and hardships (and therefore the spiritual benefits) were equably distributed throughout the continent. Why should Belgium or any other cockpit monopolise all the blessings ?

*March* 9. Played bridge with Douglas Furber who pretended he had been having tea with a woman calling herself Printemps Rosenschweig ! !

*March* 10. Repeating some ribald story of a young actor who died recently, I said I hoped he wouldn't have been annoyed.

JOCK. *Be* annoyed, you mean. He's very angry you've not talked more about him since he died.

J. A. Can ghosts be angry ?

JOCK. What else is there to do in the shades except take umbrage ?

*March 13.* Marie Tempest and husband came to lunch.

Mary very cooing and dove-like in grey furs over a girlish frock. I had previously spent a morning *molto agitato*. Instructed Jock on 'phone at 10.15 to buy *foie gras* and asparagus, sherry and cigars at Fortnum and Mason's, look in at Maple's for two sauceboats and bring the lot along. They, i.e., Jock and Arthur, arrived in the new Vauxhall at 12.45 blissfully unaware that asparagus has to be scraped, but knowing that lunch was at 1.30. My nerves and temper in shreds, but improved when they confessed to having "stopped to have one". Open confession is good not only for the soul, but for the bloke confessed to as well.

Willy said how much they missed Arnold Bennett. Next year is Mary's 50th year on the stage, and we talked of celebrations. Looking at my photos of Sarah and Réjane, Mary deplored the lesser fame of the *comédienne*, "who is never remembered". I fancy that she hankers after stage-immortality, and wants to go on in the world's mind. I admire her art intensely, and her pluck, vivacity and youth even more. Mary said that *every* day since she had been on the stage she had gone to bed in the afternoon at four o'clock and on *matinée* days at five, "and not even Royal Commands have been allowed to interfere".

*March 15.* Was Harry Preston's guest last night at the

Olympic Games Dinner. Guest of honour was the King of Greece, though I believe His Majesty is not functioning at the moment. Was astonished to find a King as kingly as Barry Jones. Decorations were worn, which reminds me that I have never had mine. I wonder if the War Office still has them, and whether it is too late to apply. Speeches fairly good, but all too long with the exception of Lord Hailsham, who looks exactly like my paternal grandfather.

Ernest told Leo, who had been pouring out lamentation for a solid hour, that there ought to be some arrangement for regulating the talk of Jews on the lines of traffic signals.

*March 20.* Why will managers insist on producing shows on Saturday? I can only think that they take no

stock of the Sunday papers. My page in the *Sunday Times* is finally closed at 7 o'clock on Saturday night ; anything that I write after this about a Saturday-night production has to be scribbled down between half-past 11 and 12 o'clock, the hour at which the paper finally goes to bed. The critic's difficulties are his own concern, and I do not ask Cochran or any other manager to take them into account. But the point is that such notice as I can give a Saturday-night show, besides being short, misses all editions except the last one and is then tucked away among the football and news—with which I cannot persuade myself that any reader of a high-class Sunday paper bothers. Managers who insist upon producing on Saturday nights should invite the critic to the dress-rehearsal. If they are shy of this it is because they have not enough brains to trust the critic who, if he is a man of sense, will make allowance for the difference between a full and enthusiastic theatre and a cold and empty one, and adjust his notice accordingly.

*March 28.* Have let the flat in Kensington Gardens Square to George Mathew.

O what a tangled web we weave when we start to write book-reviews in a hurry ! Having read and reviewed some six books in half a day, I am now called upon to explain how Coleridge could have combined with Wordsworth and Landor to make funerary pronouncements on Charles Lamb. I can always say I meant Hartley Coleridge, which will probably tie me in further knots. The probability is that it is the right Coleridge but the wrong occasion.

The thing about me which most impresses Barnet is my Webster's Dictionary. I have pedestalled it for purposes of consultation ; it is flush with the bottom of the window of my little library and from the outside it looks enormous. The laundry-boy said to Jock the other day : " Gee ! Your guvnor must be a clever bloke if he's read the whole of that big book in the window." The laundry-boy's name is Archibald Boswell Crummy and he comes from Lichfield ! To make the anecdote perfect the Dictionary ought to be Johnson's.

Geoffrey Bennett has given me a delicious mezzotint by

John Raphael Smith of Bannister and Parsons as Scout and Sheepface in *The Village Lawyer*, after de Wilde. This goes admirably with my Zoffany engraving of Shuter, Beard and Dunstall in *Love in a Village*. The re-arrangement has meant divorcing "King George III" from "Weymouth Bay".

Who is the Spanish-looking woman who clothes herself in geranium and jet and to whom I have always to be re-introduced because she makes no impression on me? The other night at a play she rushed up to me and said: "I won't be ignored. I insist upon shaking hands with Mr. Agate." What does one say to that? If I pretend recognition, it is rude not to have bowed before, and it is equally difficult to say: "I still don't know who you are." What happens is that I gaze stupidly in front of me like a sheep that something is trying to rape. For this sort of thing, when one is busy thinking of something else, is a rape upon one's attention. Besides, I don't think women ought to be allowed in the foyer between the acts. They don't want to drink, their views on the play are rubbish dictated by their personal like or dislike of the principal players, and they restrain their menfolk from the pithy, relevant comment.

*April 4.* Spent Easter at Birmingham. On Friday went to Leamington. This is the scene of that explosion of a temperance beverage which stained the lining of Miss Prism's hand-bag. Saturday was the try-out of a play that is coming to London, and there was a luncheon-gathering at the Queen's Hotel of the cast, half-apprehensive and half-jolly. I went over to Kate Cutler and told her how enormously I had always admired her. She said the most remarkable thing in her stage-experience had been the alteration in the language, and how she had found it almost impossible, in the revival of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, to cope with such lines as Mrs. Erlynne's: "Then 'tis I who must do this, that and the other." We got cheerfully on to the subject of the next world and cremation:

K. C. There's a bit of lawn at the Crematorium where they sprinkle them. I often wonder what will ultimately sprout!

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I told her of the undertaker's in, I think, Lamb's Conduit Street which has the sign : " You may telephone from here."

*April 5.* Here is some correspondence which is either amusing or pathetic, or both. I telegraphed immediately on receiving the boys' letter and entirely with the hope of encouraging them. I hope I have not encouraged them too much. It will be a tragedy if the play turns out to be no good.

*The Union,  
College Road,  
Newcastle-on-Tyne.  
Easter Monday, '34.*

DEAR MR. AGATE,

If anyone told you they had written the best comedy of manners since Congreve you would probably smile ; but if the author's conceit was backed up by a certain actress who described the play as " brilliant ", referred to the dialogue as " bright, mad and gay " and finally sent it with her personal recommendation to Miss Gertrude Lawrence then, I think, you might sit up. Especially if you learnt that the actress who was so impressed was no other than Mary Newcombe.

With this introduction perhaps you would care to hear a romantic story. It is about two young men, both under twenty-two, who have the absurd notion of writing plays and in their innocence think excellence a passport to production. They wrote *Second Act in Spain* two years ago, laboriously typed it themselves and started to submit it. Let me describe it immediately so you will see it is not " impracticable " ; it is a comedy of manners, employs 1 set, 4 characters (3 m. 1 f.) and all occurs within twenty-four hours. It is, of course, in three acts and there are no subdivisions of scenes, black-outs, etc., which our " masters of the theatre ", Van Druten for example, employ. Our romantic story, however, still awaits a happy ending.

Here is the history of the play's travels. It has been refused by all the best actresses in London ! In every case our procedure has been the same. We first asked permission to submit the play. After about ten days this is usually granted. Comes no word for six weeks, by which time we

have lost all patience and address a letter, still very humble, asking for news. Within five days we are reading the text again and wondering why it has been rejected. Please understand we have the technicalities right; the play is neatly typed and bound and a stamped addressed envelope is always enclosed. Rarely and as a great condescension some fair charmer will express an opinion. Miss Lawrence, to whom it was first submitted two years ago, found it "most interesting"; Miss Adrienne Allen described it as "unsuitable for the commercial stage". This last beats us but it may be the effect of Hollywood. Miss Nancy Price did not reply to our first letter, Miss Cooper was businesslike with her regrets, while Miss Fontanne after wiring us to forward the play to her in America accomplished the remarkable feat of reading it within two days. Incidentally we found Miss Lawrence's bookmark at page 7.

But alas that is not the end of this saga! A year ago in a weak moment we sent *Second Act in Spain* to a theatre-manager, Mr. Gilbert Miller, one notoriously eager, it appears, to read new plays. The usual pause of six or seven weeks ensued and on our writing for news Mr. Miller's secretary denied ever receiving the play. We started to re-write it from memory as we had lost the MSS. Eight weeks later the play was returned by Mr. Charlot who regretted that his engagements prevented, etc. . . . Endless correspondence, chiefly on our side of course, failed to elucidate the mystery.

I know you are a critic not a Provident Institution, and that you are a busy man and that you have had to make a rule against reading original plays by godforsaken young men. But perhaps this stranger-than-fiction story plus Miss Newcombe's opinion will allow you to make an exception. We are thinking of typing the play again, though expense is a difficulty. We have learnt what the French critic said: "Ils savaient dans ce temps-là qu'il était un travail, non pas un jeu, d'écrire une comédie." Well, we would like you to read the play. If you would do so we would rush ahead with typing and submit it in a few weeks' time.

This letter is an effort of despair. From the gallery of a provincial theatre we watch cheap, badly-written plays and know we could do better. You must think us conceited, but you once referred to Noel Coward as the best comic

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dramatist since Sheridan, and our play is better than the best of Coward. We are quite sure of that. We take the writing of plays seriously : and we still feel that although the play is economical, unified and clever it still should be accepted.

Can you and will you do anything to help us ?

We are,

Yours sincerely,

KENNETH ALLOTT.

STEPHEN TAIT.

I wired :

Letter received five minutes ago. Sit up all night typing play and I will do ditto reading it.

AGATE.

*The Union,  
College Road,  
Newcastle-on-Tyne.  
Friday, 3 p.m.*

DEAR MR. AGATE,

Your American methods have given us a shock but your kindness has only added strength to our will to succeed. We hadn't even the 7/6 necessary to hire a typewriter but we've borrowed one from a friend and by dint of missing *Morning Glory* and doing without extra cigarettes you shall have the play by Tuesday morning. That entails working Friday night, all Saturday and all Sunday but it isn't worrying us much ; although I take a final Honours degree in June and my friend Stephen works all day in a stock-broker's office. We know you are going to like the play.

It strikes us as worthy of note that the best and most intelligent actress and now critic have been the ones to show us kindness. We are not likely to forget it. May Molière, Congreve and Molnar bless you.

KENNETH ALLOTT.

STEPHEN TAIT.

P.S. Your telegram arrived 6.15 Thursday but I didn't get it till midnight and didn't see my partner till 2 p.m. Friday.

Have been extremely busy all this week working at my notice of Laughton's *Macbeth*. I broke off on Thursday to



go and hold George Bishop's hand, the new baby being expected any moment. I knocked gently and prepared to tip-toe, plug my nostrils against chloroform and veil my eyes against doctors brandishing knives, nurses carrying sinister-shaped bowls, etc., etc. But George, opening the door, roared out: "Come in. This is jolly good of you, old boy. Meg asks you to excuse her as she's feeling a bit tired and has gone to lie down!" Spent the evening yarning, disturbed by neither shriek nor groan. How civilised, in some ways, the world becomes! George told me a good story of taking the chair for Chesterton who, after the lecture, was heckled in the usual way. "Why aren't you a determinist?" someone shouted, and G. K. replied on the instant, and without hesitation: "Because, on the whole, I prefer saying 'please' and 'thank you' to the servants."

On Friday afternoon went to the dress-rehearsal of Gordon Daviot's *The Laughing Woman*. A bad play. Stephen Haggard made an enormous impression on me. He is a born actor, with a queer pathetic face, half boy-Christ and half faun. A lovely little player, who uses his hands beautifully.

Two minor incidents.

(1) Noticed an undertaker's sign in Finchley with the name "Bustle". To be fair I should add that it is really spelt "Bussel". I suppose I am the only man in England not in the trade who knows this and also that Waterloo has an undertaker called Hurry.

(2) The bailiff called this morning with a judgment summons for £20 from Southend. He handed me a pound note for conduct money, which I at once sent Arthur to put into my account in the Post Office Savings Bank. Is there something Skimpolian about this?

Now what am I to do about Charles? Met Elsa Lanchester at the first night of *Three Sisters* at Drury Lane and she told me of Charles's determination to become a tragedian if *it takes him twenty years*. Does he mean this, or is it mere face-saving?

On Sunday last gave a "tea-talk" at the Mayfair. Garland Anderson, the negro playwright, gets these things up. John Drinkwater was the "guest of honour" and didn't turn up. Owen Nares in the chair.

Diana Baerlein and her mother came to lunch on Monday. Di is dead keen on the films and never goes near a theatre. She is the young woman who, at the age of sixteen, told the head waiter at the Chatham in Paris to tell the *chef d'orchestre* to stop that rubbish—it was Mozart—and play “Tiptoeing through the Tulips”. She said to-day: “The theatre has been going some two thousand years and I don’t see how it can improve. The cinema has been established twenty minutes and has all its future to come. I would sooner be associated with a young live thing than an old and dying one.” These young people are very difficult to answer.

Had a good day yesterday. J. H. Taylor told Ivor Brown that he read my stuff in the *S.T.* and wanted to meet me. So we played a four-ball at Mid-Surrey, J. H. and me against J. H.’s son, who is a schoolmaster, and Ivor. Young Taylor played the finest shot I have ever seen—a No. 1 iron off a hanging lie on one of the famous pimples. This was at the last hole and it won to them the match.

The old man is charming. He said he considered Vardon the greatest golfer the world had ever seen, finer than Bobby Jones, and a lot better than Braid, “who was never quite straight enough”. He went on to say that Vardon was the only man whom he had always recognised as his master. “When we were drawn together and were fighting for which of us should win his sixth open championship, I was so nervous that I could not take the club-head from the ball.”

The play from the two young men at Newcastle arrived last night. I read one act in bed and the other two before getting up this morning. Brilliant dialogue and the usual no plot, all about which of three men including a husband will next leap into bed with a young woman of the type Gertrude Lawrence acts so well. I think it also might suit Tallulah, who is in town and wants a play. It is certainly a first-class piece of work of the kind that bores me personally.

April 14. Have got rid of the house at Westcliff. Marvelous!

Norman V. Norman, whom George Mair always called Norman versus Norman, came into the Savage after doing

himself well at the Garrick. His partner—I think it was Paul Farrell—bid 2 no trumps under some convention. After majestic rumblings and imperial presagings Norman said “Three Spades” and when his partner had bid Six No Trumps put down a hand containing 5 spades to the 9 and the knave of diamonds! Farrell looked at him and said: “It’s no use to anybody, Norman, coming into the club the way ye are and declaring like Coriolanus!”

Nothing else to record except the deaths of Gwladys Wheeler and Gerald du Maurier. The first is a real grief to me and the second is a great loss to the theatre world. He was a much better actor than he had ever the inclination to be; as it is he has left a name that will last out this century at least.

Invented rather a nice title for the new American musical comedy at the Lane: *Sweet Knell of Old Drury*.

The letters about Laughton continue to roll in.

*April 23.* Birthday celebrations at Stratford.

I was down to propose the toast of the Drama, to be responded to by Martin-Harvey. The whole thing was broadcast and everybody was allotted his proper time. Lady Snowden started off on the subject of “The Immortal Memory” and so much exceeded her time that poor Sir John was cut off in the middle of his speech to make way for a symphony concert from Bournemouth. The *Radio Times* announced me as “Mr. J. A. AGATE” and, taking the cue, so did *The Times* and every other newspaper. This sort of thing infuriates me. So I wired the *Radio Times* Editor:

Jacob served seven years for Rachel and was beguiled stop how many more periods of seven years must I serve the B.B.C. before it can get my initials right in its official organ stop am hating you all day. AGATE.

Said something in my speech which I believe to have been of importance in view of the place in which it was said:

We hear a great deal to-day about the decay of the Drama, and I am going to ask you to consider whether people are not confounding this with the fact that speculators sometimes lose money in theatrical ventures. With

this is coupled something that is always called "The Menace of the Cinema". I want you to get it out of your heads, that the art of drama is the same thing as the business of theatrical entertainment. The Drama is an art, one of the oldest and greatest of the arts. Amusing the public is a commercial proposition and a man's legitimate walk in life, just as legitimate as though he were a building-contractor.

But to supply bricks and lead-piping does not make a man an architect, and to put money into the purveying of the materials of entertainment does not put a man on the level of a dramatist, an actor, or a producer like Reinhardt, Komisarjevsky, Mr. Bridges Adams, or Mr. Robert Atkins. In fact the time is ripe for putting the entire caboodle of theatrical managers into their place and keeping them there. It is the Drama and not the business of entertainment which is my toast.

I now come to something that I want to get into people's heads. The thing which has to be got in is so simple that everyone will wonder why it has not been thought of before. It is like the schoolboy's definition of an axiom, "something so obvious that you cannot see it". Now what is this thing? The thing is the realisation that the theatre and the cinema are competitors, rivals, enemies, only in so far as both are part of the business of entertainment. In so far as they are both manifestations of the dramatic spirit they must be allies.

Essentially the Drama is an abstract thing which speaks through theatre and film just as music speaks through musical compositions of different kinds and by means of different instruments. You cannot say that the violin is music and the clarinet not, and the same thing applies to the saxophone. Now please understand me, or "get me right", as our American friends say. My point is that as the violin and the saxophone are both instruments of music, so the theatre and the cinema are manifestations of Drama, and I have said nothing and shall say nothing as to their relative values.

I then went on to show that through Greek, Shakespearean, and down to modern times Drama has been the clash of hero and fate, hero and character, and one kind of hero against another kind. I concluded :

Always we see that the Drama is the association of warring opposites. But that, so far as I understand Science at all, is the very thing which keeps the Universe going. I am told that if the atoms in this table at which I stand were to become reconciled there would be no table. A Universe without a clash of wills would become static and ultimately sink into inertia, and so cease to function.

Now, I cannot accept the view that the theatre is the sole instrument for the embodiment of this mighty and universal principle. For a long time that instrument has been the three-dimensional theatre. Now has come the two-dimensional screen, and to-morrow television may be the medium. Can we be sure that if the cinema or television or even a fourth medium, had existed in the days of Æschylus or Shakespeare they would have made no use of them? The spirit of Drama is the master of its servants, who all must tend its lamp.

The Drama means and can only mean the spirit and not the method of its presentation. Though there may be difference in beauty I see no more essential virtue in the footlights of the stage than in the arc-lights of the studio. Both are but pale echoes of that greatest and most dramatic of all pronouncements: "Let there be light: and there was light."

I have the vanity of wanting to put it on record that I am the first *dramatic critic* to have said this, and that I chose Stratford as the place at which to say it.

May 1. There are some little things in this newspaper world of ours which irritate me to the point when I do not know whether to laugh or cry. One of these is the craven attitude taken up towards advertisers. During the war a little east-coast resort, well known for its snobbery, did not allow wounded soldiers on its promenade. A great newspaper suppressed my reference to this grotesque piece of nonsense because it was afraid of offending one or two of that stinking little hole's hotels advertising in its columns.

Another thing is the absurd jealousy among papers. They are so afraid of advertising a rival that they will not even call the *News of the World* Golf Tournament by its right name if

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they can avoid it. Even more idiotic is the mania for self-advertisement, which will not boggle at such a sentence as : "The outbreak of war on August 4th, 1914, which, as readers will remember, was announced in *The Daily Blare* . . ."

I never hope to persuade newspapers to believe that a piece of writing is a piece of writing and should be paragraphed as the author wrote it. The view taken is that no reader can take in more than an inch without a break. But there is one folly which drives me to frenzy and against which I have fought for years and am still fighting. This is the mania for putting numbers into figures, so that you find this kind of thing :

Since the span of human life is 3 score years and 10, we do well to remember the poet's advice :

In delay there lies no plenty ;  
Then come kiss me, sweet and 20.

The lines, of course, are from *12th Night* ! Good shorthand and all right in a Diary but hellish in a piece of considered writing.

May 2. Cochran now cuts me publicly, perhaps because over the wireless I told listeners how, at the first night of *Magnolia Street*, he turned his back on his own show and sat in a stage-box glaring at the critics with an eye half-way between that of a lighthouse-keeper and a lion-tamer !

Mislaying my Newcastle playwrights' address I wired their club for it telling them it was only a routine matter. This so excited them, however, that they rang me up from Newcastle at four o'clock in the morning. This correspondence then followed :

167 *Fairholm Road,*  
*Newcastle-on-Tyne.*  
*April 27th, 1934.*

DEAR MR. AGATE,

I hope you don't think we are hysterical as our frantic telephoning on Wednesday last might suggest. We had excessive gloom. We were firmly convinced that you had a lunatic secretary who delighted in revenging herself on all misguided playwrights pestering you by sending out such letters as we do.

When your telegram arrived we assumed that since you wanted a quick reply news of the acceptance or otherwise of the play was imminent. A friend placed his 'phone at our disposal and hence our call.

And the reason for this letter? I hardly know, except that we envisage deeper and more oppressive gloom until we hear from you, and this letter is a feeble and, I am sure, quite unnecessary attempt to stimulate such news.

Mr. Peters has not yet written, but I try sincerely but unsuccessfully to convince myself that we shan't hear from him until the play is accepted. May it be very very soon.

Yours sincerely,

KENNETH ALLOTT.

S. TAIT.

*Livingstone Cottage,  
Hadley Green, Herts.*

30th April, 1934.

DEAR MR. TAIT,

I quite understand your impatience. But don't get excited. At the very best, twelve months must elapse before anything in the theatre world can be got moving. If the gods are in form for working miracles, something may happen in six months. All I can tell you is that your play is now being considered in the best possible quarters, that not one second is being lost, and that you will only do yourselves harm by being over-anxious. The proper thing for you to do now is to forget all about *Second Act in Spain* and take your minds off it by writing another play.

I think this is the proper place to tell you that *Second Act in Spain* is the kind of piece that I dislike intensely, that I am bored to tears with plays about who shall sleep with some young woman à la Gertrude Lawrence, Tallulah Bankhead, Lynn Fontanne, Ina Claire and all the rest of them. At all plays in which the sole interest is somebody's sleeping-arrangements my bowels gush forth! I think I may even go so far as to say that all plays about sex have totally ceased to interest me. They are, however, still very fashionable with the young men and young women who spend their lives combing their beards and lacquering their toe-nails, and if you cannot write any other kind of play I suppose you will have to go on writing this one under other names.

You will realise, therefore, that for me to see exceptional merit in a piece which bores me to distraction is a very high compliment. It is because of its wit and craftsmanship that I am interested in your play, and because of your youth that I am interested in you two. Will you therefore please (1) stop worrying yourselves and (2) stop worrying me.

Your affectionate mentor,

JAMES AGATE.

My night in the chair at the Savage Club was, I think, a great success. Benno played beautifully, and Mark as though he were wearing a crash helmet. Caleb Porter led off with a recitation of Browning's "Prospice". This made Jock leave his seat to come round and whisper: "The ghost of Banquo *would* turn up at your feast!"

On Sunday afternoon George Bishop said suddenly: "Come with me to Tangier on Friday." I accepted, and since Monday morning—it is now Wednesday evening—have written one book article, two articles under a pseudonym, one film article, one *Sunday Times* article, and have seen a play. Also made final arrangements for the purchase of a Bentley, 6½ litres, 1928 model. When new cost £2,800 and have got it for £275 getting the Vauxhall taken off my hands at what it now stands me in. Nett result £50 down and 18 instalments of £14. Also received a visit from my delightful bailiff, who advised me in the matter of some dozen or sixteen writs, the same number as the lines Hamlet wrote into *The Murder of Gonzago*. They are all small, thank Heaven, and the aftermath of Westcliff. And I thought they were all paid!

Told Ernest how busy I had been and said he would now understand why sometimes my articles are a bit thin. He said: "Thin? I often wonder some of 'em don't pass away altogether."

May 3. Broadcast last night with an eye to Tait and Allott, and here append the beginning of my talk. This is something every commencing playwright ought to realise:

I have been asked by a young author how to get a play put on. He assures me that his piece, which he calls *Matrons*



*in Uniform*, is a professional and not an amateur job of work, that it is long enough while each of its three acts seems short enough, that everybody will see its point except the Censor, that the leading actress gets all the fat, that in short the piece is feasible in every way. How is he to get it put on? Must he send it to me, or to a play-agent, or direct to a manager?

Now let me suppose that this young man is telling the truth, that his play is the real stuff and as much suited to the theatre as, let me say, Mr. Maugham's *The Circle*. Let it even be imagined that the young author has taken the proper step of sending it to one of the five or six accredited play-agents in London, and that that agent has sent it to the right management. There is a great deal in this. It is no earthly use submitting a tea-cup comedy to Drury Lane, or a drama on the Repeal of the Corn Laws to the Aldwych. Let it be supposed, too, that the theatre manager selected is wide-awake, not on his way to America, and likes the play. Let us even suppose that he can raise the money. What I should then say to the author is this :

"My dear boy—a play requires more than a willing management with money. It needs also an actor, or more probably an actress, and a theatre. You will remember Browning's :

Never the time and the place  
And the loved one all together !

This is even more true of the theatre. Let me now tell you what happens in the case of each and every play. Stage One. Mr. A is willing to produce Miss X in your play, but alas has no theatre empty ! Three months elapse. Stage Two. Mr. A now has a theatre, but Miss X is playing in something else. Three months elapse. Stage Three. Miss X's play fails, and Mr. A's theatre is still empty. But now Mr. A is no longer interested because his backer has shied off. Six months elapse. Stage Four. Mr. A re-interests himself in your piece, which means that another backer has turned up, Miss X will talk about nothing else, and Mr. A's theatre is emptier than ever. A final conference is now held and Mr. Z, the gentleman engaged to produce the play, is present. At the meeting it is unanimously decided to shelve *Matrons in Uniform* and produce *Jumping Jenny*, of which play nobody has heard till that

moment. Stage Five. You blow out your brains ! Stage Six. *Jumping Jenny* runs two nights. Stage Seven. A manager whom nobody has approached and an actress of whom nobody has heard get together, surround themselves with an ignominious cast, and produce *Matrons in Uniform* at some wholly unlucky theatre in a heat-wave in August. The play runs for a year ! ”

The rest of my advice to any young author would be to make his play as good as he can, place it in the hands of a first-class agent, and forget all about it. And the best way of forgetting, in my opinion, is to set about writing another play. Lastly, let the young author remember that the production of any piece is not a matter of merit, or industry, or the qualities which go to make up success in any other profession or business. That the curtain should ever rise on anything is an incredible and gorgeous fluke !

May 9. This cruise is, I must suppose, exactly like every other cruise. No reason why it should be different. By the way, I ought to have remembered my man-overboard complex. A ship's side is to me what a tube station platform is to other people, so that I spend the entire voyage blotting myself against the cabins away from the sea. I settle down to do some reviewing, and on the first page of the first book I find the words, “Of course, he may have jumped overboard. Many people do.”

Have won every night at bridge—over £5 at sixpence a hundred ! Principal opponents are a young woman who looks like Madge Titheradge, Norma Shearer and Cicely Courtneidge, and her yachting husband.

Not much good talk. Except that George, on sighting Tangier, said : “Not my idea of Africa !” Also that the Atlantic Ocean is the only really convenient way of disposing of old razor blades.

According to George we nearly had a mishap in the Thames, owing to a boat in front turning round too quickly.

“Who told you ?” I asked.

“*One of the management !*” said George.

Four hours at Gibraltar which, of course, I must spend in getting melancholy over the tombs in the Trafalgar Cemetery.

Promised myself that I would not be done by the natives, and in less than two minutes of landing had bought a *Daily Mail*, Paris edition, 14 days old ! Drove round the rock and asked the chauffeur if he knew England. He replied. "Yessir. Verr grand country !" I asked him what part of England he had found very grand. He said, "Barrow-in-Furness."

May 10. Summoned to the bridge by the Captain who explained everything, including a device for rescuing men overboard. Somebody presses a button, which releases a life-belt, etc. But I know that if I do it, it will be at dead of night, with nobody about. Note that I have not dared to write this sentence until after my last night on this blasted boat.

May 19. Must really keep this Diary more up to date. On the way to Arles stopped at Salon where I think I saw my mother-in-law. If I was not mistaken and it was indeed she, she has grown very old and grey and bent. But I am sure that I could not mistake that excessively delicate walk.

They told me at the café that my father-in-law shot himself a year or two ago because of money troubles. They told me that Edmée was at home, but of course I did not call. If I am ever to see her again, I think I ought to write and ask permission, and not look in upon her in passing. There is a decency to be observed in these matters.

I saw M. Fabre, the mayor, who married us. He looked a little older but was still stroking his beard in the way I remember. I was conscious of no emotion whatever except a vague curiosity. 1918, the War, Salon, my marriage—all this seems utterly and unbelievably dead, and I don't want to revive it.

Perhaps this is the secret of immortality, that when you get into the next state you don't want to revive the old one, and if there isn't any next state you won't be there to want ! Or am I content that all connected with Salon should be dead to me because I never really liked it ? One must not colour truth with preferences. If I had really loved Salon and all



*At Work*



that, I might want to revive it, which would knock on the head my new notions about immortality.

At Arles met Anthony West, the son of Rebecca. He is a pleasant and extremely intelligent boy, and I liked him ten times more when I heard that after three days in Arles he was "fed to the teeth".

George Bishop is a delightful travelling-companion except that his metaphysics are entirely sentimental, and he will drag Browning into life at the Old Port at Marseilles and wonder why the niggers and prostitutes and Mediterranean riff-raff can't be brought to brace themselves up and march breast forward never doubting clouds will break. Henceforth I am going to call him, "Blougram Bishop"—and hope never again to hear that thing about "a chorus-ending from Euripides". I should not so much mind "a Hackney-showing at Olympia". To me "a fancy from a flower-bell" is no more proof of the existence of God than a sting from a nettle. It is *as much* proof, but no more. Whereas George only sees proof in things which are pleasant to him. I can just conceive that God, while equally manifest in the evil as in the good, is still more quintessentially existent in the battle between them, because peace would mean inertia.

We travelled from Marseilles to Paris on the 10.30 train on Sunday. There were five first-class passengers! We arrived at the Gare du Nord at 11 o'clock, and were so tired-out that we spent what was left of the evening sitting in a café opposite the station. If anybody had told me thirty years ago that I should spend a night in Paris gazing at a station-clock!

Almost the first person I saw when I got back was Dicky Clowes. A witty and charming person, and a great friend of Jock's. He said: "Hello, Jimmie. How did you enjoy being away with Bishop? I suppose you've now got 'Sordello' by heart!"

May 24. Saw the Comédie Française in *Ruy Blas*. How dull this is to modern ears! Albert Lambert reminded me of a wax-work figure in Madame Tussaud's best Velazquez vein. Lambert is seventy, and his *Ruy Blas* is an old man galvanised into a young one.

*May 26.* A letter from that God-wotty place, Broadway, Worcestershire. Begins :

Frankly, Sir, I do with real honesty of purpose thank God and you for constructively, refreshingly and with Divine humour adding to my knowledge and joy of life by your broadcast criticisms of the modern stage. . . .

But what does the capital "D" mean? Does it mean that my humour is God-like, or that God's humour is Agatian? Both seem to me to be faintly blasphemous. The writer ends by desiring Allah to preserve my "grey matter, humourosity and larynx!"

*June 6.* Jock has invented a character in a comedy—"Miss Qualm". It is to be played by Jean Cadell. Also a lady music-critic—"Manon Troppo".

Reflection for to-day :

In my profession as critic, not to have been at a University has been an immense handicap to me. All my colleagues are still redolent of Oxford, though Darlington of the *Telegraph* went to Cambridge, as may be seen from his style. All of them, including Darlington, are members of the Garrick Club, at whose open windows they sit, dining and wining, gibing and jeering, while I creep past below to find myself a public-house crust. Every evening at seven o'clock I am conscious of this social inferiority, driven like a porterhouse stake through my heart.

*June 25.* Show record for this year fairly satisfactory up to date :

Tulip.	3rd Oxford.
	3rd Bath and West.
	3rd National.
	1st (under 14.2) Royal Counties.
	1st (all heights)       "       "
	2nd Leicester.
	2nd Staffordshire.
Diamond.	2nd (hand) National.
	3rd (harness)       "
	3rd Leicester. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Diamond, who had been seedy when I bought him, had another bout of illness after this show, and was not really fit again until the summer was nearly over. Then on 1 September, he had a great success at a show at Littleborough,

June 26. One or two good stories lately. Discussing the accident at Whipsnade in which a young man fell into the lions' pit and was mauled to death, Monty said : " Of course, I'm sorry for the young man. But apart from that I think it's rather a good thing. It reminds us that lions can still bite ! All those doped and toothless old things we see in circuses have made us forget this, and it gives more point to the story about Daniel ! " Going into the Shaftesbury Hotel for a drink one evening when I was at the Phoenix Theatre I met an old hag, all collar-bones, salt-cellar and garnets. She said : " Last year I went over to Dublin to see the draw for the Derby. I didn't go this year. *When you've seen it once you've seen it always !* "

Lancashire. Here the opposition was unexpectedly strong, since it contained Barcroft Belle, who in the possession of poor Arthur Fish had been champion of the National, the Royal, Richmond and Olympia, pretty well any time she liked in the last three or four years. Belle is not much to look at, but she is a tremendous goer and has more courage and works herself into a greater state than any animal I have ever seen in a show ring. The class also contained Glenavon Cupid, a beautiful little pony that had been winning all over the country. To my surprise and delight Diamond, who is as good-looking as Belle and Cupid put together, made a magnificent, effortless show, going extremely high all round and carrying himself with great poise and without a bearing rein. The result was that he was placed first, Belle second and Cupid third, and it was gratifying when the drivers of these two came up after the class and said it had been judged rightly. Three weeks later Tulip made a grand show at Altrincham, being placed second to Nanette, the best mare in England and now at her zenith, and easily beating Wensleydale Madge and Habrough Searchlight, thus avenging certain earlier of this season's decisions with which I had never been satisfied. There were ten or twelve in the class. Tulip went magnificently, and when she gets to her full age and strength will be unbeatable. After the class they all came round and congratulated me, and Hinrichsen said he hadn't seen such hock action since Menella in 1905. It is something to have the two best young animals in the country, and I attribute this in great measure to Albert Throup's genius for bringing out the best in horse or pony and just a little to my knack of knowing " quality " when I see it. But the whole of the credit for bringing out Tulip and Diamond, once I had bought them, belongs to Albert. I am reminded of Whistler's show of his pictures and how he advertised them in the catalogue as : " Pictures kindly lent their owners by J. McNeill Whistler. " I feel that my entry in the show catalogues should read : " Black Tulip, kindly lent her owner, James Agate, by her breeder, Albert Throup. " The photograph of Tulip given in this book shows her at very nearly her best, and is, I think, a wonderful effort. It was taken on a dull day in September, late in the afternoon, with the rain coming down in sheets. Frank Meads is a fine artist.



*June 27.* A wee cloud has appeared on the financial horizon. All because I forgot about that writ for a miserable £20.

*June 28.* To-day comes a letter from a lady at Maidstone who says that she is thirty-three, a contented wife and happy mother. She has no personal vanity, but my wireless talks have fired her with a desire to go on the stage and can she come and read the part of Shakespeare's Cleopatra to me?

*June 29.* Financial storm blowing up.

At the theatre last night saw X—, attended as usual by a raging beauty. But, like George Bishop, he is a Browning fan, and when the poor girl mentions bed looks at her sternly and says that she is baffled to fight better, sleeps to wake! Jock: "It's a case of upstairs and downstairs, but never in my lady's chamber!" This diary contains so much of Jock that some day I can see somebody publishing it under the title of "Johnson's Life of Boswell".

*July 3.* Storm breaks. All the lawyers in London appear to have spent yesterday writing letters beginning "Unless . . ."

ACCOUNT WITH RESPECT TO JAMES AGATE'S BOOK ENTITLED  
*FIRST NIGHTS*—From his Secretary, Alan Dent.

10th JANUARY, 1934—For having morosely looked through the <i>Sunday Times</i> articles, tastefully choosing such as should appear in permanent book form . . . . .	4½ hours	9s.
20th FEBRUARY—For having sulkily specified and ordered the agreed copies of the paper . . . . .	1 hour	2s.
21st MARCH—For having interestedly (promise of emolument having been made) flourished scissors and brandished gum-brush to neat and tidy effect . . . . .	15 hours	30s.

1934]

I LIE ON IT

25th JUNE—3rd JULY—For having diligently corrected and re-corrected proofs, correcting some of the corrections, verifying a thousand allusions, laboriously examining and comparing corrections with Author, and general erasing and polishing . . . . .	17 hours 34s.
28th JUNE—14th JULY—For having keenly compiled an Index to said Book, comprehensive, accurate, and not without fun . . . . .	33 hours 66s.
13th JULY—For having enthusiastically revised proofs of Index and verified that all corrections have been correctly made . . . . .	3 hours 6s.
	<hr/>
	147s.
	<hr/>

July 6. Storm increasing. “*Une dette est une œuvre d’imagination que les créanciers ne comprennent pas.*”

July 10. Full gale.

July 11. Joel Potter, son of my old friends at Chapel-en-le-Frith, sends me this story from Bangkok, sent him by his brother Ernie who is out there, culled from the *Bangkok Times*.

Four Chinese merchants (Li, Pu, Chang and Lung) bought a cat to protect their textiles, stocked in a warehouse, from rats and mice. They were quite separate merchants, but had combined to hire one warehouse. In buying the cat each of them presumed proprietorship of a paw. Pu possessed the left front paw. In making a leap one day, the cat crushed that paw. It was duly dressed, but next day, while the cat was lying by the hearth, the dressing caught fire. Then the frightened animal rushed all over the place setting fire to the goods, which were all destroyed. Then Li, Chang and Lung said to Pu: “You are responsible for this disaster, since it is the dressing of your paw that set fire to our goods.” Pu had

no reply to this reading of the law on the point, but he thought it might as well be confirmed by a Court of Justice. This was the decision of the Judge : " I find that Li, Chang and Lung must pay damages to Pu for the loss of his goods. It was the three paws belonging to them that enabled the cat to move and to set fire to the textiles ! "

July 12. Typhoon. "*La dette est un martyre, sans le ciel pour récompense.*"

July 14. !!!!! A demand for my Reminiscences !!!!!

" Privately printed, of course," said Leo. Fortunately a great chunk of diary is already done. Can I do the balance, say 70,000 words or the length of a short novel, in six weeks ? Why not ? I go to Whitby in August, and calculate that I have not more than seventeen holiday articles to write. So all hands to the pumps ! This means, of course, an additional secretary. Jock is quite firm about this. I say something about his habit of deserting me in a crisis, and he coldly replies that Mr. Micawber never asked Mrs. Micawber to type one hundred and fifty thousand words, probably four times over, in addition to looking after the twins !

July 15. Storm abating. Probably because I have despatched a few " trifling, foolish " cheques, to use old Capulet's adjectives.

July 16. Visit from Tait and Allott. To ginger me and the London managers up, they spent the savings of their nineteen years, or whatever it is. Charming babies !

July 17. Played with the notion of calling this book *Insubstantial Pageant*. Why ? On the off-chance that in a little while I may be piping a second instalment entitled *Pageant Fading*. Perhaps even a third, final, childish volume to be called *Pageant Faded*, mumbled sans teeth, sans taste, to a Jock dour yet pursuing. But that is too

1934]

I LIE ON IT

much in the future, and in the meantime Charles has arrived. Donning that one of my dressing-gowns which most resembles M. Jourdain's, I burst into my workroom shouting :  
“ *Holà, mes deux secrétaires !* ”

LONDON, *June* 1932,

WHITBY, *August* 1934.



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